

PASTORAL IDENTITY IN PERSPECTIVE:  
A TRIPERSPECTIVAL MODEL FOR TEACHING AND FORMATION

A THESIS-PROJECT  
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To Hayley

(Proverbs 5:18)

Our vocation is a call to serve God and our fellow humans  
in the distinctive way that fits the shape of our being

-David G. Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself*

This is how one should regard us,  
as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

-1 Corinthians 4:1 (ESV)

## CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	VII
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	VIII
ABSTRACT .....	IX
 CHAPTER I: THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING.....	1
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>2. The Problem</b> .....	3
<b>3. Pastoral Identity Crises</b> .....	4
<b>4. The Chronic Pastoral Identity Crisis in the Church</b> .....	6
<b>5. The Roots of the Pastoral Identity Crisis</b> .....	12
<b>6. Pastoral Challenges</b> .....	17
<b>7. Pastoral Pathology</b> .....	20
<b>8. A Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity</b> .....	21
<b>9. Thesis</b> .....	27
<b>10. Methodology</b> .....	28
 CHAPTER II: THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK .....	29
<b>1. Personal Identity</b> .....	30
<b>2. Union with Christ</b> .....	39
<b>3. Pastoral Office</b> .....	41
<b>4. Calling to the Ministry</b> .....	43
<b>5. Pastoral Authority</b> .....	48
<b>6. The Pastoral Identity of Jesus</b> .....	52
 CHAPTER III: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	57
<b>1. The Development of Pastoral Identity Studies</b> .....	57
<b>2. Pastoral Identity Descriptions &amp; Definitions</b> .....	58
<b>3. Pastoral Identity &amp; Pastoral Function</b> .....	62

4. Pastoral Identity as Pastoral Office .....	66
5. Pastoral Identity as Self-Concept .....	71
6. Pastoral Identity as Social Construct .....	76
7. Pastoral Identity (Re)Formation .....	84
8. Pastoral Identity & Personal Identity .....	91
9. Pastoral Identity Assessment .....	96
CHAPTER IV: PROJECT DESIGN .....	99
1. Curriculum Development .....	99
2. Pilot Group Participants .....	99
3. Pre-Test .....	100
4. Curriculum Presentation .....	102
5. Post-Test .....	106
CHAPTER V: OUTCOMES .....	109
1. Critical Reflection on Feedback .....	109
2. Conclusions Reached .....	114
3. Areas for Further Study .....	116
APPENDIX A: CURRICULUM PRESENTATION SLIDE SHOW .....	118
APPENDIX B: PRE-TEST RESULTS .....	136
APPENDIX C: POST-TEST RESULTS .....	140
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	146
VITA .....	155

## ILLUSTRATIONS

### Figures

1. The Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity ..... 23, 29, 66
2. A Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity Crises ..... 27, 114
3. Reinard Nauta's Pastoral Communication Model..... 80
4. The Pastoral Identity (Re)formation Cycle ..... 86

### Tables

1. Images That Guide My Practice of Ministry..... 110
2. Useful Applications of the Triangular Model ..... 113

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## ABSTRACT

Pastoral identity problems are common, affecting all areas of pastoral experience and functioning. A healthy pastoral identity is essential for resolving identity crises, meeting pastoral challenges, and healing pastoral pathologies. Therefore, this thesis-project utilized the theological method of triperspectivalism to develop a model of pastoral identity for use in the pastoral care and counseling of pastors. The model was tested with a pilot group of pastors and found to be an effective method for understanding and resolving pastoral identity crises, discussing and teaching the concept of pastoral identity, and re-forming and enhancing pastoral identity.

## CHAPTER I: THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

### 1. Introduction

Pastors need to be pastored. Although called to shepherd God's flock, pastors remain sheep who need a shepherd. Despite their divine calling, they remain fully human, having the same basic needs as everyone else. In addition, the pastoral calling is inherently challenging. Pastors need support to navigate the many pressures, conflicts, and temptations of ministry. Furthermore, many pastors experience a pastoral identity crisis.<sup>1</sup> Questions and doubts about who they are as pastors can erode their confidence, impair their judgment, damage their relationships, and disrupt their functioning. Finally, pastors sometimes need help overcoming deleterious patterns of functioning and relating. In those cases, pastoral pathology requires intervention.

Donald Houts has noted that "historically, the church has a weak and inconsistent record of providing pastoral care for pastors."<sup>2</sup> Matt Bloom, who heads the Flourishing in Ministry research project concurs: "And while we also know that denominations want to support their clergy, many clergy are not receiving that help."<sup>3</sup> The authors of Resilient Ministry add, "People in ministry rarely feel understood and seldom have anyone with whom they can openly talk about their experiences."<sup>4</sup> Pastors who acutely feel a lack of support might resonate with the findings of a study of ex-pastors from 1970: "ex-pastors feel they have been betrayed by the church system which recruited them on flimsy grounds, trained them inadequately, placed them unwisely, gave them courage to preach prophetically, then proved unwilling or unable to help them in trouble and let them go with scarcely an afterthought."<sup>5</sup> Tom Nelson's recent

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1. John E. Johnson, "The Old Testament Offices as a Paradigm for Pastoral Identity," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152 (April-June 1995): 182.

2. Donald C. Houts, "Pastoral Care of Pastors," in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, ed. by Rodney J. Hunter (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 830.

3. Matt Bloom, *Flourishing in Ministry: How to Cultivate Clergy Wellbeing* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), xii.

4. Bob Burns, Tasha D. Chapman, and Donald C. Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us About Surviving and Thriving* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013), 12.

5. Gerald J. Jud, Edgar W. Mills, Jr., and Genevieve Burch, *Ex-Pastors: Why Men Leave the Parish Ministry* (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1970), 51.

assessment of how pastors are doing is concerning: “The inconvenient truth is that many younger pastors and more seasoned pastors are hurting and ineffective. They are often inadequately trained, spiritually malformed, chronically discouraged, and woefully prepared to lead increasingly complex institutions and diverse faith communities.”<sup>6</sup> Despite shining examples, the Church at large has underserved its pastors in providing the care and support they need.

There are encouraging signs that the Church is doing more to care for its pastors. Books, ministries, conferences, retreats, and programs for pastors have abounded in recent years. Most focus on such interventions as coping skills, professional development, support systems, conflict management training, leadership training, counseling and psychotherapy, equipping the laity, self-care, or any combination of the above. These approaches are necessary and helpful; but they are not enough. These methods do more to manage symptoms than to cure root causes.

Several credible voices have called for more than expertise in the formation of pastors. David Hanson reminisces about the misguided assumptions of the many “how-to” books on his shelf when he was new to ministry:

The authors assumed too much. They assumed that I knew what my goal was. They assumed that I knew what I was and who I was. They assumed that I knew why I was supposed to be doing the things they were teaching me about.... And I didn’t know how any of the things I was supposed to be doing fit into a coherent understanding of my call from God to be a pastor.<sup>7</sup>

Likewise, Edwin Friedman, who has applied systems theory to church leadership, has asserted that self-definition is more important for pastors than expertise.<sup>8</sup> According to Tom Nelson in his recent book *The Flourishing Pastor*, pastors who have lost their way need more than techniques.<sup>9</sup> He writes, “Finding their way home again will require more than adopting a new philosophy of ministry or the latest church

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6. Tom Nelson, *The Flourishing Pastor: Recovering the Lost Art of Shepherd Leadership* (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 13.

7. David Hanson, *The Art of Pastoring: Ministry without All the Answers* (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 9.

8. Edwin H. Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York: Guilford Press, 1985), 2-4. Self-definition for Friedman means defining one’s place and role in the various ‘family’ systems to which the pastor belongs.

9. Nelson, *The Flourishing Pastor*, 13-14.

growth techniques. It will call for more than tweaking schedules and adjusting pastoral practices. What is needed is gaining greater paradigmatic clarity around the pastoral calling.”<sup>10</sup> As these quotes suggest, pastors need more than expertise or coping skills.

Pastoral health depends on more than sheer competence, and pastoral problems are often due to something deeper than a lack of expertise or skill. Pastors need clarity about their identity. Is there a missing component in the pastoral care of pastors that could provide that clarity? An intervention is needed that provides self-definition for pastors, encompasses both the inner person and the outer work of the pastor, and provides a coherent understanding of the call to be a pastor.

## **2. The Problem**

This thesis-project addresses pastoral identity problems, which are common among pastors and chronic in the Church. They affect all areas of pastoral experience and functioning. Broadly speaking, pastors face three categories of problems: pastoral identity crises, pastoral challenges, and pastoral pathology. While this project focuses on the first, it assumes that all three are interrelated, with pastoral identity problems being central. Pastoral identity problems hinder overall effectiveness in ministry, prevent resilience in responding to challenges in pastoral ministry, and contribute to or exacerbate problems pastors develop in their functioning (i.e. pastoral pathology). The research of Matt Bloom and the Flourishing in Ministry project supports this view: “The very clear result from our research is that a pastor’s identity... is at the core of pastoral wellbeing.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore, one must treat pastoral identity issues in order to treat the other two categories of problems. This project explores the potential usefulness of the concept of pastoral identity for treating pastoral identity crises and its related problems.

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10. Nelson, *The Flourishing Pastor*, 29.

11. Bloom, *Flourishing in Ministry*, xii.

### 3. Pastoral Identity Crises

In every age, the Church and its leaders have been faced with the question of what a pastor is.<sup>12</sup> Some periods of church history, such as the Medieval Roman Catholic and the Reformation period, have had very clear and definite conceptions of the ministry.<sup>13</sup> Other periods have been characterized by confusion or vagueness concerning pastoral identity.<sup>14</sup> Regardless of the level of clarity in the Church at large, many pastors personally experience a crisis related to their identity.<sup>15</sup> Even if pastors do not experience something as acute as a crisis, many remain confused about their identity as pastors.<sup>16</sup> One might argue *all* pastors experience some kind of pastoral identity problem in the course of their ministry. In fact, John Patton writes, “I am convinced that there is in our theological heritage as ministers a persistent concern about who we are. It is difficult for me to imagine anyone being really comfortable with a calling to carry on the work of Christ.... It is the nature of ministry for the minister to be concerned about whether or not it is possible *for me* to be a minister.”<sup>17</sup>

So, what is a pastoral identity crisis like? Eugene Peterson offers a firsthand account:

I am misunderstood by most of the people who call me pastor. Their misunderstandings are contagious, and I find myself misunderstanding: What am I? What is my proper work? I look around. I ask questions. I scout the American landscape for images of pastoral work. What does a pastor do? What does a pastor look like? What place does a pastor occupy in church and culture?<sup>18</sup>

Wayne Oates has described the phenomenon as “the dilemmas that pastors undergo in the formation of the particular uniqueness that the pastor’s identity brings to the Christian ministry. The struggles of the spirit occasioned by being a real person in the face of the expectations and demands of a congregation

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12. Cf. H. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel D. Williams, eds, *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983).

13. H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry* (New York: Harper & Row, 1956), 50.

14. Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church*, 50.

15. Johnson, “Old Testament Offices,” 182.

16. Wayne Oates, *The Christian Pastor*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), 129.

17. John Patton, *Pastoral Counseling: A Ministry of the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1983), 39, 57.

18. Eugene H. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction*, vol. 4 of Eugene Peterson’s Pastoral Library: Four Books in One Volume (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 40.

genuinely shake the foundations of all preconceptions.”<sup>19</sup> Pastoral identity crises involve confusion, questioning, anxiety, and ambivalence. As a result, they can create significant levels of distress and dysfunction in the pastor.

While built on a biblical and theological foundation, this project assumes that discoveries from the behavioral sciences are valuable. The study of *personal* identity in the behavioral sciences provides helpful analogies for *pastoral* identity in practical theology.<sup>20</sup> For example, psychologists James Côte and Charles Levine, claim personal identity crises are “characterized by a subjective sense of identity confusion, a behavioral and characterological disarray, and a lack of commitment to recognized roles in a community.”<sup>21</sup> Consequently, pastoral identity crises exhibit a similar mixture of confusion, disarray, and lack of commitment.

A pastoral identity crisis may be precipitated by personal development, a change of season in one’s ministry, or contextual factors in the surrounding Church or society. William Kincaid points out that “crisis events” in ministry can trigger a pastoral identity crisis. These moments “press you to reflect on them through pastoral and theological lenses.”<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, they “cause us to consider penetrating and troubling questions. Who am I as a minister in a moment like that? How does my pastoral identity inform my response? How does the Christian story inform my response? What personal issues and needs do I bring to such an encounter? To what extent do local cultural norms and congregational practices determine what I say and do?”<sup>23</sup> These are penetrating questions indeed. Yet, if answered well, they can lead to greater clarity, confidence, and fruitfulness. Hence, the term pastoral identity *crisis*. The experience, though troubling, is a critical turning point in one’s development as a person in ministry.

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19. Oates, *The Christian Pastor*, 10.

20. Franz L. Shostrom, “The Definition and Assessment Of Professional Identity In Clergy,” (Ph.D. diss., Kansas State University, Manhattan, KA, 1985), 2-3, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

21. James E. Côte and Charles Levine, *Identity Formation, Agency, and Culture: A Social Psychological Synthesis* (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2002), quoted in Samuel Park, *Pastoral Identity as Social Construction: Pastoral Identity in Postmodern, Intercultural, and Multifaith Contexts* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2017), 9.

22. William B. Kincaid, *Finding Voice: How Theological Field Education Shapes Pastoral Identity* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012), xii.

23. Kincaid, *Finding Voice*, xii.

Other problems in pastoral identity may seem less dramatic than what the word ‘crisis’ conveys. Pivotal seasons or accumulated experience in ministry may cause some pastors to adjust their pastoral identity in light of new knowledge about self and context. To quote Kincaid again, “The practice of ministry calls for reflection, which in turn leads to reappraisal.”<sup>24</sup> This reappraisal need not be tumultuous or dramatic. It might include major changes or minor adjustments.

#### **4. The Chronic Pastoral Identity Crisis in the Church**

For almost one hundred years now, a chronic pastoral identity crisis has plagued the Church in the United States. Just as different periods of church history have had varying levels of clarity about pastoral identity, so different segments of the Church within the same historical period might also vary in the clarity of their conceptions of ministry. Nevertheless, broadly speaking, since the first quarter of the twentieth century the Church in the United States has struggled with a chronic pastoral identity crisis.

In the 1930s, Professor Mark A. May, in his study entitled *The Profession of the Ministry: Its Status and Problems*, reported a confusion about the nature of the ministry.<sup>25</sup> He wrote, “What is the function of the minister in the modern community? The answer is that it is undefined. There is no agreement among denominational authorities, local officials, seminaries, professors, prominent laymen, ministers or educators as to what it is or should be.”<sup>26</sup> This ambiguity was only beginning and would persist for the rest of the century.

In 1954, H. Richard Niebuhr, after an extensive study of theological education in North America, called pastoral ministry “the perplexed profession.”<sup>27</sup> Niebuhr’s memorable phrase would be used by other authors as a refrain for years to come. A few years later, in 1956, Samuel Blizzard published the results of his study of Protestant clergy in the article, “The Minister’s Dilemma.” His study found

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24. Kincaid, *Finding Voice*, xii.

25. Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church*, 51.

26. Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church*, 51.

27. Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church*, 48.

ambivalence and ambiguity in pastors because of conflicting expectations for the pastoral role.<sup>28</sup>

In the mid-1960's, William Hulme noted the effects of the culture's emphasis on psychiatry and science on pastors: "The minister suffers from a sense of professional inferiority.... The minister's loss of prestige is that of one who used to be on the inside and now stands outside looking in."<sup>29</sup>

Jeffrey Hadden wrote in 1970 that one of the four major crises facing the Church of his day was "the crisis of identity for the Protestant clergyman."<sup>30</sup> In 1971, Urban Holmes saw a mounting pastoral identity crisis that was attributable to the dramatic shift in pastoral image that occurred in the twentieth century.<sup>31</sup> He claims that in the 1800s, a minister in England or America, whether Protestant or Catholic, was the *stupor mundi*—the "wonder of the world." However, by the 1970s, the pastor had become the *stupidus mundi*—the "stunned of the world."<sup>32</sup> He expressed concern about the slipping image of ministers in society, the growing exodus of clergy from ministry, and the quality and health of ministers.<sup>33</sup>

In an article published in 1980, Lloyd Rediger, an experienced counselor of pastors, mentioned the uniqueness and complexity of pastoral identity as a contributing factor in the concerning rise in clergy burnout.<sup>34</sup> In 1984, Edward Bratcher, added that a pastoral identity crisis often extends beyond the pastor to his family.<sup>35</sup> Both the spouse and children struggle with developing their own personal identity in light of the expectations placed on them by the church community. The pastoral family wrestles with such questions as, "Can a minister's family be themselves? Can the minister's spouse be his or her own person? Are the children accepted on their own merits without undue pressure to play certain roles?"<sup>36</sup> In

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28. Samuel W. Blizzard, "The Minister's Dilemma," *The Christian Century*, Apr 25, 1956, 508-510.

29. William E. Hulme, *Your Pastor's Problems: A Guide for Ministers and Laymen* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966), 20.

30. Jeffrey K. Hadden, *The Gathering Storm in the Churches* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1970), 239.

31. Urban T. Holmes III, "Stupor Aut Stupidus Mundi" in *The Future Shape of Ministry* (New York: Seabury Press, 1971), 139-166.

32. Holmes III., "Stupor Aut Stupidus Mundi," 139.

33. Holmes III., "Stupor Aut Stupidus Mundi," 139-140.

34. G. Lloyd Rediger, "Clergy Burnout," *Church Management*, 56, no. 8 (July 1980), 10.

35. Edward B. Bratcher, *The Walk-On-Water Syndrome: Dealing with Professional Hazards in Ministry* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1984), 88-94.

36. Bratcher, *Walk-On-Water Syndrome*, 88.



1986, Dr. Louis McBurney cited “the crisis of identity” as one of the major problem areas for pastors. He explained, “It may also be easy for a minister to say, ‘I’m pastor of the Community Church.’ Identifying what that means is another question.... The vocational and social identity of the minister is often complex and poorly defined. There may be confusion as to professional roles, social relationships, sexuality, and belonging.”<sup>37</sup> By 1989, Eugene Peterson was contending that “The essence of being a pastor begs for redefinition.”<sup>38</sup> By “redefinition” he meant “refusing the definitions of *pastor* that the culture hands me, and reformulating my life with the insights and images of Scripture.”<sup>39</sup> It would appear that one of the things neither Church nor culture handed pastors in the 1980s was clarity about their identity.

In 1991, David L. Larsen, the chair of the Department of Practical Theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, opened his book on pastoral ministry stating, “Clearly the pastor-teacher is enveloped in a critical identity crisis in our time.”<sup>40</sup> In 1992, Eugene Peterson was at it again, publishing a reflection on “vocational holiness” using the book of Jonah which he titled, *Under The Unpredictable Plant*. He shared a poignant example of his own pastoral identity crisis after a “wake-up call” from his young daughter about how compulsively he worked as a pastor. His crisis led him to resign only to have his elders reject his resignation and renegotiate how they worked together.<sup>41</sup> Writing a few years later in 1995, John E. Johnson observed, “Many pastors face an identity crisis. They ask themselves, ‘Who am I? Why should the people in my congregation listen to me? What is my identity as a minister of Christ?’”<sup>42</sup> In 1996, David Fisher observed that the identity crisis that had been fomenting for decades was still plaguing the Church. He writes,

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33. 37. Louis McBurney, M.D, *Counseling Christian Workers: A How-To Approach* (Waco, TX: Word Publishing, 1986),

38. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor*, 16.

39. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor*, 16.

40. David L. Larsen, *Caring for the Flock: Pastoral Ministry in the Local Congregation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), xi.

41. Eugene H. Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness*, vol. 3 of Eugene Peterson’s Pastoral Library: Four Books in One Volume (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 38-39.

42. Johnson, “Old Testament Offices,” 182.

Back in 1954, H. R. Niebuhr wrote about the church and ministry and called the pastorate the “perplexed profession.” Niebuhr correctly suggested that the crisis in ministry is primarily a crisis of identity. The communities in which we work no longer value our product or our role the way society once honored the church and its ministry. We are providing a service to a world that no longer wants it. Professional religious leaders are an anachronism in a secular culture. Even our congregations wonder about us.<sup>43</sup>

As the twenty-first century approached, it seemed that neither the Church nor pastors were any closer to resolving the pastoral identity crisis. What would the new century hold?

In 2011, Eugene Peterson, a perennial voice on the topic, published another work on pastoral ministry. *The Pastor: A Memoir* “is the story of my formation as a pastor and how the vocation of pastors formed me.”<sup>44</sup> In the Introduction, Peterson shares this reflection, “In the process of realizing my vocational identity as pastor, I couldn’t help observing that there was a great deal of confusion and dissatisfaction all around me with pastoral identity.... In the fifty years that I have lived the vocation of pastor, these defections and dismissals have reached epidemic proportions in every branch and form of the church.”<sup>45</sup> In other words, it was a new century but the same, old sickness.

The following year in 2012, the Reformed evangelical, Paul Tripp, published *Dangerous Calling*, which outlined three underlying themes he observed in many pastors and himself: “I let ministry define my identity,” “I let biblical literacy and theological knowledge define my maturity,” and “I confused ministry success with God’s endorsement of my lifestyle.”<sup>46</sup> That Tripp is describing the characteristic struggles of a pastoral identity crisis is made clearer by the two main warnings under which he groups his advice: losing your awe (forgetting who God is), and the danger of arrival (forgetting who you are).<sup>47</sup>

That same year, mainline Presbyterian pastor David Rohrer published *The Sacred Wilderness of Pastoral Ministry*. Though he never used the term, Rohrer lamented a pastoral identity crisis affecting the

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43. David C. Fisher, *21st Century Pastor: A Vision Based on the Ministry of Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), Introduction, Kindle.

44. Eugene H. Peterson, *The Pastor: A Memoir* (New York: HarperOne, 2011), 2.

45. Peterson, *The Pastor*, 5.

46. Paul David Tripp, *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 21-28.

47. Tripp, *Dangerous Calling*, Table of Contents.

Church on account of it being “rocked by the waves of a changing culture.”<sup>48</sup> According to Rohrer, the Church in his day was struggling for survival. As a result, conceptions of pastoral identity were dominated by institutional images and concerns.<sup>49</sup> His solution is to hold up John the Baptist as an image of a successful pastor.

The Francis A. Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership Development has studied pastors since the 1980s. Periodically, they publish updates of their work. In the 2016 update, Dr. Richard J. Krejcir acknowledged many positive findings regarding pastors and churches. However, he added the observation that pastoral identity crises are common due to the demands and expectations of ministry. He writes,

Pastors still get so overwhelmed with the business of the work they forget the Who and why it is all about. Many church boards place too many expectations and expect their minister to do it all while they just go to meetings. Meetings are considered the ministry instead of the strategy and planning of the ministry. They all can easily forget who God is, and who we are in Christ. If the pastor does not know who God is and what our call and responsibilities are, then how are they to grow in our faith, in maturity, and in character, not to mention in leading others in the direction of God's call? It can't be done! All you will have is burnout. What remains is a lifeless, weak church filled with fads, factions or dysfunctions, and this is the result of no direction in life or brought on by a distinct lack of discernment and spiritual growth.<sup>50</sup>

Krejcir's comments correlate pastoral identity with pastoral wellbeing and church health. They also show that the pastoral identity problems were still plaguing the Church.

Matt Bloom and his team at the Flourishing in Ministry research project spent most of the 2010s studying clergy wellbeing. They published reports of their findings along the way in 2013 and 2017. Bloom published the most recent update, *Flourishing in Ministry*, in 2019. In it, he assesses pastoral identity through factors such as authenticity and self-integrity. When it comes to the status of pastoral identities, he writes, “The data are very grim for the 20 percent of pastors whose authenticity is severely compromised. Self-integrity and dignity are both very low for this group.... Many have been among the

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48. David Rohrer, *The Sacred Wilderness of Pastoral Ministry: Preparing a People for the Presence of the Lord* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 12.

49. Rohrer, *Sacred Wilderness*, 12-15.

50. Richard J. Krejcir, *Statistics on Pastors: 2016* (Francis A. Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership Development: 2016), 17-18, accessed August 27, 2021, <https://files.stablerack.com/webfiles/71795/pastorsstatWP2016.pdf>

walking wounded of ministry in that their pastoral identity has been severely diminished.”<sup>51</sup> This means that one in five pastors have severely compromised areas of their wellbeing which relate directly or indirectly to pastoral identity!

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit in early 2020, the symptoms of the pastoral identity crisis went from chronic to acute for many pastors. Almost overnight, pastors’ identities were thrown into upheaval as they scrambled to adjust to leading from lockdown and quarantine. The challenge of ‘virtually’ shepherding their flocks in the midst of a public health crisis was daunting and stressful. For some, the strain led to burnout, loss of confidence, and questioning their calling. According to a Barna poll taken in June of 2021, 29 percent of pastors *seriously* considered a career change in the last year.<sup>52</sup> Crista Cordova explains, “The realities of the ongoing pandemic, coupled with congregational divisions, and financial strain have pastors struggling with significant burnout.”<sup>53</sup> Carey Nieuwhof, commenting on the same Barna poll, noted that many pastors have lost their confidence as a result of the pandemic. According to him, it is understandable. “Things are changing so quickly and remain so unpredictable that almost everything that used to be effective isn’t, and just when you think you might get it figured out, things change again.”<sup>54</sup> It suddenly became apparent that ministering in times of crisis can throw one’s pastoral identity into upheaval and confusion. The Covid-19 pandemic created a pastoral identity pandemic that was ready to breakout in problems for every pastor it infected.

Finally, as recent as 2021, Tom Nelson, an experienced pastor and president of Made to Flourish, published *The Flourishing Pastor* and called the pastorate a “calling in crisis.”<sup>55</sup> His solution is to return

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51. Bloom, *Flourishing in Ministry*, 36.

52. Christa Cordova, “Has the Pandemic Made Your Pastor Want to Quit? Probably,” *The Better Samaritan* (blog), *CT Blog Forum*, June 2, 2021, [https://www.christianitytoday.com/better-samaritan/2021/june/has-pandemic-made-your-pastor-want-to-quit-probably.html?utm\\_source=CT%20Pastors%20Newsletter&utm\\_medium=Newsletter&utm\\_term=79679&utm\\_content=5748&utm\\_campaign=email](https://www.christianitytoday.com/better-samaritan/2021/june/has-pandemic-made-your-pastor-want-to-quit-probably.html?utm_source=CT%20Pastors%20Newsletter&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_term=79679&utm_content=5748&utm_campaign=email).

53. Cordova, “Pandemic.”

54. Carey Nieuwhof, “29% of Pastors Want To Quit: How To Keep Going When You’ve Lost Confidence In Yourself,” Carey Nieuwhof (blog), CareyNieuwhof.com, April 4, 2021, <https://careynieuwhof.com/29-of-pastors-want-to-quit-how-to-keep-going-when-youve-lost-confidence-in-yourself/>.

55. Nelson, *The Flourishing Pastor*, 11-27.

to the metaphor of shepherding as a paradigm for the pastoral vocation, using Psalm 78:72 as a key text.<sup>56</sup> If Nelson's assessment is valid, it means that the pastoral identity crisis first diagnosed in the 1930s continues to infect many in the Church today.

## 5. The Roots of the Pastoral Identity Crisis

Various authors have tried to pinpoint the roots of the chronic crisis just described. Most can be grouped into three main categories of contributing factors: *theological*, *existential*, and *contextual*.

1. *Theological* reasons deal particularly with practical theology and the definition of pastoral office. John Johnson cites "a deficiency in pastoral theology" as the first of three reasons for a pastoral identity crisis. He observes that "too little time has been given to developing a theology of ministry, in which students address what God defines as ministry and calls a minister to be."<sup>57</sup> Like Johnson, Urban Holmes also sees a deficiency in pastoral theology that has muddied the waters of pastoral office. He writes, "There has been a shift from one or two clearly defined ideas of what it is to be a clergyman... to a different and poorly defined role."<sup>58</sup> Holmes also faults seminaries for a "disintegrated education."<sup>59</sup> Finally, David Fisher also sees a theological problem: "The personal and professional identity crisis is the symptom of a systemic ecclesiastical disease. There is no accepted theology of the ministry in our time. Instead, the practice of ministry has become the theology. The task itself is the model."<sup>60</sup>

2. *Existential* reasons usually have to do with how the pastors see themselves and how they experience the interaction of their own self-concept with others' expectations and perceptions. For example, another of Johnson's three reasons for pastoral confusion is that "People have changed in how they expect pastors to spend their time, preach their sermons, and shepherd their people."<sup>61</sup> Holmes points

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56. Nelson, *The Flourishing Pastor*, 11-27.

57. Johnson, "The Old Testament Offices," 182-183.

58. Holmes III, "Stupor Aut Stupidus Mundi," 140.

59. Holmes III, "Stupor Aut Stupidus Mundi," 144-148.

60. Fisher, *21st Century Pastor*, Introduction.

61. Johnson, "The Old Testament Offices," 182-183.

out the emergence of new, conflicting expectations pastors face within the congregational setting. “More often” he writes, “the pastor has not clarified his theology and self-image to the point where issues can be defined between himself and his parish, and *he becomes a function of his congregation....* [I]t is remarkable how many a clergyman fulfills the *congregation’s* image of the pastor, which is utterly incongruent with the Gospel’s.”<sup>62</sup>

Brian Rosner claims that “there are good reasons to think that ‘identity angst,’ to coin a phrase, is on the rise in the twenty-first century.”<sup>63</sup> Could the personal “identity angst” prevalent in the culture be exacerbating the pastoral identity crisis? Rosner goes on to add that it is “harder to know who you are today than at any other point in human history.”<sup>64</sup> If pastors are struggling like everyone else to know themselves, it is no surprise that pastoral identity will come under pressure too.

Paul Tripp believes that part of the problem lies in searching for one’s identity horizontally rather than vertically. He writes,

Human beings are always assigning to themselves some kind of identity. There are only two places to look. Either you will be getting your identity vertically, from who you are in Christ, or you will be shopping for it horizontally in the situations, experiences, and relationships of your daily life. This is true of everyone, but I am convinced that getting one’s identity horizontally is a particular temptation for those in ministry.<sup>65</sup>

Tripps’ point is well taken; but his horizontal and vertical dichotomy is overdone. The vertical identity from God is foundational; but it is not the exclusive component of personal or pastoral identity. Nevertheless, if a pastor has no normative reference point for clarifying personal identity (i.e. vertically in Christ), pastoral identity will be clouded.

Archibald Hart, a clinical psychologist, highlights another existential reason for pastoral identity problems. He writes,

I believe that one of the most important developmental tasks every minister must master is the task of separating his self-image from his role identity. There is a strong tendency for ministers to derive their self-image and thus their self-esteem from their vocational role. In other words, who they are

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62. Holmes, III, “Stupor Aut Stupidus Mundi,” 150.

63. Rosner, *Known by God*, 24.

64. Rosner, *Known by God*, 24.

65. Tripp, *Dangerous Calling*, 22-23.

is determined by what they do. Self-identity easily merges with role identity, so that it becomes increasingly difficult for ministers to separate themselves from their work and from the many roles they play as pastors.... There must be a clear boundary between what the self is and what the self does, if one is to be mentally healthy.... Confusing self-image and role identity only gets in the way of God's power to work through us in any vocational situation.<sup>66</sup>

Conflating self-image with role identity creates an existential crisis that destabilizes both personal and pastoral identity. Without differentiation for the sake of integration, the pastor's own sense of self will be vulnerable to the ups and downs of one's ministry performance or other's expectations.

3. *Contextual* reasons point to socio-cultural factors as underlying causes of the pastoral identity crisis. Examples include cultural shifts, ideological conflicts, and societal pressures swirling around pastors. David Larsen observes, "Massive, sweeping changes in the cultural and societal environment of the church at the end of the twentieth century seem to call into question everything the church has believed about herself. Boisterous new and diverse models vie for attention."<sup>67</sup> Johnson cites "the present drift toward relativism and a pluralistic mindset" that has "raised the question of pastoral relevancy."<sup>68</sup> In 1993, David Wells noted that "[t]he pastoral ministry has been culturally adrift for a long time. It has been dislodged from the network of what is meaningful and valuable in society."<sup>69</sup> In *The Contemplative Pastor*, Eugene Peterson bemoans the tension between pastors' self-concept and the culture's misconception of pastors: "In general, people treat us with respect, but we are not considered important in any social, cultural, or economic way."<sup>70</sup> David Fisher also blames contextual factors: "This century witnessed the collapse of the Christian consensus that held American culture together for centuries. The secularization of our culture pushed the churches to the margins of our nation's consciousness. The moral relativism that accompanies a secular view of reality deeply affects the work of the church and its

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66. Archibald D. Hart, *Coping with Depression in the Ministry and Other Helping Professions* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1984), 22.

67. Larsen, *Caring for the Flock*, xi.

68. Johnson, "The Old Testament Offices," 182-183.

69. David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 219.

70. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor*, 29.

ministry.”<sup>71</sup> These quotes are evidence that tectonic cultural shifts took place over the twentieth century.

As a result, pastoral identity was left shaking at the turn of the millennium.

By way of analogy, Erik Erikson’s work on personal identity is illustrative of how contextual factors influence pastoral identity crises. Erikson adapted Sigmund Freud’s *psychosexual* stages of development and formed his own model of *psychosocial* identity development. In other words, a person’s identity is both a *psychological* process and a *social* process. Identity crises usually occur in adolescence but often vary across generations. Erikson claims that “epidemiological variations of such crises over the decades strongly suggest some relation to changing history.”<sup>72</sup> His explanation is that

the nature of the identity conflict often depends on the latent panic pervading a historical period. Some periods in history become *identity vacua* caused by three basic forms of human apprehension: *fears* aroused by new facts, such as discoveries and inventions...; *anxieties* aroused by symbolic dangers vaguely perceived as a consequence of decaying ideologies; and the *dread* of an existential abyss devoid of meaning.<sup>73</sup>

The identity crisis traced thus far would suggest that the last one hundred years has been a series of “identity vacua” that have created apprehension in the Church and have thrown pastoral identity into crisis.

Some recent studies have shown evidence of confounding effects of contextual factors on a pastor’s vocational identity. The research sponsors of the Barna Group’s *The State of Pastors* report from 2017 concluded that the church and its pastors find themselves in an increasingly complex cultural situation:

As the world grapples with lingering wars, poverty, injustice, racial tensions and political strife, the Church, the living Body of Christ in this world, matters as much today as ever. Yet troubling trends point to shifting attitudes, as least in the US, toward the perceived relevance and value of the Church.... Pastoring a flock in such a complex season is not easy. The shifting environment places tremendous pressure on church leaders who are trying to make sense of our moment in history and interpret it through the lens of their Christian faith.<sup>74</sup>

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71. Fisher, *21st Century Pastor*, Introduction.

72. Erik H. Erikson, “Autobiographic Notes on the Identity Crisis,” *Daedalus* 99, No 4 (Fall, 1970): 734.

73. Erikson, “Autobiographic Notes,” 733. emphasis added.

74. Barna Research Group, and Pepperdine University, *The State of Pastors: How Today's Faith Leaders Are Navigating Life and Leadership in an Age of Complexity* (Ventura, CA: Barna Research Group, 2017), 5.



*The State of Pastors* also studied how pastors are perceived by the average American and discovered indifference: “What *is* significant is the extent to which pastors (real ones) have dropped off the radar as a cultural force.... Most don’t actively hate pastors, not at all. They just don’t especially care.”<sup>75</sup> It is interesting to note, however, that two-thirds of people who actually know a pastor have a “very positive” opinion of them.<sup>76</sup> Regardless, contextual changes have left society wondering about the relevance of the Church and pastors. In turn, some pastors were left wondering about themselves.

Pastors were also wondering what it means to be a pastor in such a context. A pastor’s poll conducted by the Barna Group from November and December 2019 inquired about pastors’ concerns for the Church in the United States. 66 percent cited “the culture’s shift to a secular age.”<sup>77</sup> 58 percent were concerned about “addressing complex social issues with biblical integrity.”<sup>78</sup> 46 percent said “negative perceptions of the Church” were a major concern for the Church, and 45 percent cited concern over the “diminished influence of churches in their communities.”<sup>79</sup> One in five pastors polled were concerned about the “diminished influence of pastors in the community.”<sup>80</sup> The apprehension Erikson described is palpable in these responses.

Finally, Samuel Park observes a similar tension between the cultural trends and pastoral identities,

Despite ecclesial and denominational endorsement of pastoral authorities, parish ministers also have trouble with their pastoral identities as transcendental values and authorities fade in postmodern environments and as parishioners’ faith and theological wisdom compete with scientific knowledge. In that situation, clergypersons can easily experience burnout because of ‘blurred pastoral identity’ more than of overwork.<sup>81</sup>

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75. Barna, *The State of Pastors*, 115.

76. Barna, *The State of Pastors*, 115.

77. “What’s on the Minds of America’s Pastors,” *Barna.com*, February 3, 2020, [https://www.barna.com/research/whats\\_on\\_mind\\_americas\\_pastors/](https://www.barna.com/research/whats_on_mind_americas_pastors/)

78. “What’s on the Minds of America’s Pastors,” *Barna.com*.

79. “What’s on the Minds of America’s Pastors,” *Barna.com*.

80. “What’s on the Minds of America’s Pastors,” *Barna.com*.

81. Samuel Park, *Pastoral Identity as Social Construction: Pastoral Identity in Postmodern, Intercultural, and Multifaith Contexts* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2017), 191.

Park's comments reveal the pressure today's cultural milieu puts on pastors and the connection between a clear pastoral identity and pastoral wellbeing.

These three roots—theological, existential, and contextual—have fed a widespread struggle with pastoral identity in today's Church. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that a pastoral identity crisis is likely to be one of the presenting issues encountered by those who care for pastors. Pastoral identity re-formation would be the obvious intervention for such an issue. Pastoral identity formation is often a key concern of theological schools and seminaries as they prepare men and women for ministry. But those who care for and oversee pastors must also be concerned with enhancing and sustaining pastoral identity in those presently engaged in ministry. This thesis-project seeks to be a small part of that goal by testing a basic, functional model of pastoral identity that can be used to form and re-form pastoral identity.

## **6. Pastoral Challenges**

A second major category of issues faced by pastors is pastoral challenges. It is beyond the scope of this thesis-project to form a comprehensive catalogue of them. Yet, pastoral challenges include, but are not limited to role conflicts, unreasonable expectations, pressure to succeed, criticism, conflict, politics, difficulties that come with being a generalist, financial concerns, mobilizing volunteers, loneliness and isolation, stress, always feeling “on-duty,” lack of a private life, dealing with resistance to change, spiritual warfare, and caring for people in crisis. This thesis-project asks whether a healthy pastoral identity might fortify pastors to face these challenges with confidence, resilience, and effectiveness.

It seems universally accepted that pastoral ministry is filled with as many challenges as opportunities. The title of Paul David Tripp's book says it all: *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry*. Tripp contends that part of what makes ministry so challenging is that the difficulties common to every vocation are compounded by “temptations that are either unique to or intensified by pastoral ministry.”<sup>82</sup> Matt Bloom, who heads the Flourishing Ministry research

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82. Tripp, *Dangerous Calling*, 12.

project, has captured it well: “Pastoral work is complex, challenging, often arduous, sometimes exhausting, and almost always very important for the lives of church members and communities.”<sup>83</sup> In 2015, Lifeway Research conducted a study of over 1,500 evangelical and historically black churches. Lifeway’s vice-president, Scott McConnell summarized the findings: “This is a brutal job. The problem isn’t that pastors are quitting—the problem is that pastors have a challenging work environment.”<sup>84</sup> Tom Nelson summarizes, “In aggregate, the weighty and complex stewardships pastors carry often feel exhausting and overwhelming. The pastoral calling is a very challenging vocation.”<sup>85</sup> Despite the deeply satisfying rewards of ministry, pastors regularly experience a dangerous and bewildering vortex of expectations, pressures, conflicts, losses, and temptations.

In his book, *After 50 Years of Ministry*, Bob Russell shares that he found pastoral ministry “extremely rewarding and gratifying.”<sup>86</sup> In fact, he claims he would do it all over again.<sup>87</sup> Still, he begins his book to young pastors with a sober assessment of ministry’s difficulties.

Ministry is hard. It’s rewarding. It’s a divine calling. But it’s a very difficult task day in and day out. We’ve probably all seen the statistics on pastors who leave the ministry, the state of clergy marriages, ministers who battle depression, and more. Some studies paint a very dark picture; others are rosier. But regardless of the numbers, the point is that the ministry is a high, holy, and *hard* calling.<sup>88</sup>

How did Russell remain faithful for fifty years? He explains, “I would be listed with those pastors who said they felt happy and content on a regular basis with who they are in Christ, in their church, and in their home.”<sup>89</sup> In other words, pastoral identity gave him resilience.

One might ask, “Is ministry harder today?” Hoge and Wenger’s 2005 study of clergy from five

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83. Bloom, *Flourishing in Ministry*, x.

84. Lisa Cannon Green, “Despite Stresses, Few Pastors Give Up on Ministry,” *LifewayResearch.com*, September 1, 2015, <https://lifewayresearch.com/2015/09/01/despite-stresses-few-pastors-give-up-on-ministry/>.

85. Nelson, *The Flourishing Pastor*, 6.

86. Bob Russell, *After 50 Years of Ministry: 7 Things I’d Do Differently & 7 Things I’d Do the Same* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2016), 17.

87. Russell, *After 50 Years*, 18.

88. Russell, *After 50 Years*, 17.

89. Russell, *After 50 Years*, 18-19.

Protestant Mainline denominations found no evidence to support a conclusion that pastoral ministry has become more difficult since the 1960s. However, they recommended that anyone trying to understand pastoral ministry should assume that it is different than it once was. As the authors put it, “Today’s pastors are shepherds to a more educated and cosmopolitan flock whose denominational loyalty has diminished along with its overall trust in institutions.”<sup>90</sup> Despite Hoge and Wenger’s claim to the contrary, ‘different,’ as they describe it, does sound ‘harder.’ Matt Bloom would agree. He believes that the valuable work of pastoral ministry “continues to change and become more challenging and perhaps even dangerous.”<sup>91</sup> Moreover, David Fisher claims, “Being a pastor today is more difficult than anytime in memory.”<sup>92</sup> Pastors will need to ask how their pastoral identity will be tested and affected by today’s ministry milieu. Such a situation only highlights the need for a clear pastoral identity.

Pastoral challenges call for resilience. David Kinnaman, president of Barna Group, which conducted the sweeping study *The State of the Pastor* in 2017, came to the conclusion that “the Christian Community in North America does not need stronger leaders; we need *more resilient* leaders.”<sup>93</sup> Resilient pastors as those who “develop the inner resources and supportive relationships that enable them to prioritize their own spiritual, emotional, and physical needs; to view challenges realistically; to learn from their mistakes; to consider alternative perspectives and new processes; and to expect that God is at work even in adverse situations.”<sup>94</sup> Bob Burns, Tasha Chapman, and Donald C. Guthrie spent seven years studying the resiliency factors of pastors. They identified “five key themes:” spiritual formation, self-care, emotional and cultural intelligence, marriage and family, and leadership and management.<sup>95</sup> This project seeks to build upon these findings. It asks if pastoral identity can be an inner resource and a resiliency factor that can help pastors cope with the challenges of ministry.

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90. Hoge and Wenger, *Pastors in Transition*, 9.

91. Bloom, *Flourishing in Ministry*, xi.

92. Fisher, *21st Century Pastor*, 4.

93. Barna, *The State of Pastors*, 9.

94. Barna, *The State of Pastors*, 9.

95. Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry*, 16.

Many of the challenges of ministry are unavoidable. The point is not to remove the challenges; it is to see in them an opportunity for growth. Barbara Gilbert puts it well:

Stress is frequently seen as negative, but when stress is of reasonable proportions it can be an invitation to creativity and change. However, when stress is long-term, unresolved, or of crisis proportions it may deaden creativity and be destructive of health and the ability to function. Understanding the stresses of ministry can be an open door to using them creatively. The aim is not to avoid all stress, but to understand and use stress as an invitation to personal, professional, and systemic change and growth.<sup>96</sup>

Pastoral identity might be an effective tool for equipping pastors to see and respond to pastoral challenges as an invitation to creativity and change.

## 7. Pastoral Pathology

The third major category of issues faced by pastors is pastoral pathology. Using mental and behavioral health as an analogy, this project assumes that there is pastoral health and pastoral illness. This project will refer to this pastoral illness as “pastoral pathology.” The term does not refer to psychological pathology in the pastor. Rather, it refers to a persistent problem or set of problems in the pastor’s functioning or relating as a pastor.

At what point do pastoral problems become “pathological” and require intervention? Like all diagnoses, it is a judgment call. Some general criteria from the field of contemporary psychopathology is helpful by way of analogy. McRay, Yarhouse, and Butman write, “Though no universally accepted definition exists for the term or concept *psychopathology*, most of the definitions share common emphases, sometimes referred to as ‘the four D’s’—danger, distress, dysfunction and deviance.”<sup>97</sup> McRay, *et al.* also provide a helpful summary of the Church’s historical understanding of human pathology that adds two more ‘D’ words:

Rooted in a biblical worldview and a theological understanding of the fall, the Christian church has historically viewed human beings as *disordered*—all of us. Our thoughts, emotions, behaviors and relationships are not what they should be—not what they were created to be. We live in a world

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96. Barbara Gilbert, *Who Ministers to the Minister?: A Study of Support Systems for Clergy and Spouses* (Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 1987), 4.

97. McRay, Barrett W, Mark A Yarhouse, and Richard E Butman, *Modern Psychopathologies: A Comprehensive Christian Appraisal*, second ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016), 33.

*deformed* by sin, and we treat each other in sinful ways. All of us face the challenge of living in this reality; however, we are not all given the same resources to face this challenge.<sup>98</sup>

These criteria are helpful for diagnosing pastoral pathology. When a pastor's ministry is disordered or deformed, or characterized by distress, dysfunction, danger, or deviance, then pastoral pathology is present and intervention is needed.

The number of pastoral complexes and syndromes identified by authors is legion. When surveying the literature, one encounters numerous diagnoses, descriptions, and categories of pathology that are either common among or unique to pastors. They include but are not limited to, relationship problems, marriage and family problems, superhuman complexes, disintegration complexes, maladaptive coping mechanisms, depression, burnout, narcissism, passivity or domineering, addiction, perfectionism, work-aholism and compulsive busyness, people-pleasing, co-dependency, and legalism.

It is beyond the parameters of this project to test the usefulness of pastoral identity as an intervention for any particular pastoral pathology. However, this project assumes a correlation between pastoral identity, pastoral pathology, and pastoral challenges. It will test a model for strengthening pastoral identity with the assumption that a well-formed pastoral identity will help pastors cope with pastoral challenges and have a therapeutic effect on pastoral pathology.

## **8. A Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity**

Several authors have emphasized the importance of pastoral identity for the health and effectiveness of pastors. Wayne Oates urges, "If you are to do your work well, refreshing strength must be afforded you from a coherent vision of your identity."<sup>99</sup> Samuel Park agrees, "Pastoral identity is of tremendous importance, not only providing pastoral persons with values, meanings, and boundaries for their ministries but also helping them maintain proper relationships with their care partners, faith communities, the Divine, institutions, and other professionals." David Larson claims, "A Biblically and

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98. McRay, et al., *Modern Psychopathologies*, 33, emphasis added.

99. Oates, *The Christian Pastor*, 129.

theologically sound identity for the pastor-teacher is of the utmost importance.”<sup>100</sup> Finally, Matt Bloom reports, “One very clear result from our research is that a pastor’s identity—his or her sense of him- or herself as a person *and* his or her sense of him- or herself as a pastor—is at the core of pastoral wellbeing.... Our identity is, then, the ‘heart’ of our wellbeing.”<sup>101</sup> All this has led E. E. Thornton to conclude: “Clearly the issues related to pastoral identity warrant the investment of large resources both in research and in programs enhancing the formation of pastoral identity.”<sup>102</sup>

Surprisingly, however, pastoral identity remains “a prevailing yet underdeveloped theme in Christian scholarship and ministry.”<sup>103</sup> What study has been done on pastoral identity has taken place primarily in two settings: seminaries and the field of pastoral care and counseling.<sup>104</sup> In preparing students for ministry, seminaries incorporate pastoral identity into their pedagogy, curriculum, and field education.<sup>105</sup> As the pastoral counseling and chaplaincy movements emerged in the mid-twentieth century, the importance of maintaining pastoral identity became apparent. Providing a specialized ministry in a secular, interdisciplinary setting (e.g., a hospital) put strain on the caregiver’s pastoral identity. As Samuel Park explains,

They struggled with their pastoral identities in the context of working within an interdisciplinary healing team or in a setting where secular therapeutic theories heavily influenced pastoral counseling. In such an interdisciplinary context, they wondered about how they perceived themselves in caring for others and whom they represent to care-seekers.<sup>106</sup>

The history of specialized ministries has been a struggle to maintain pastoral identity. Therefore, theologians, educators, and providers in the pastoral care field sought to understand and enhance pastoral identity. Their efforts have produced the bulk of research on pastoral identity.

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100. Larsen, *Caring for the Flock*, xi-xii.

101. Bloom, *Flourishing in Ministry*, xii.

102. E. E. Thornton, “Identity, Pastoral,” in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, ed. Rodney J. Hunter (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 568.

103. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 1.

104. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 1-2; Cf. also Shostrom, “Professional Identity In Clergy,” 2.

105. Kincaid, *Finding Voice*, xii.

106. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 5.

The aim of this thesis-project is to test the wider usefulness of the concept of pastoral identity. It will draw on these studies of pastoral identity in the field of specialized ministries and theological education in order make applications to pastors in general. To do so, it has developed the Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity to test its usefulness in teaching, discussing, and forming pastoral identity in pastors (See Figure 1).

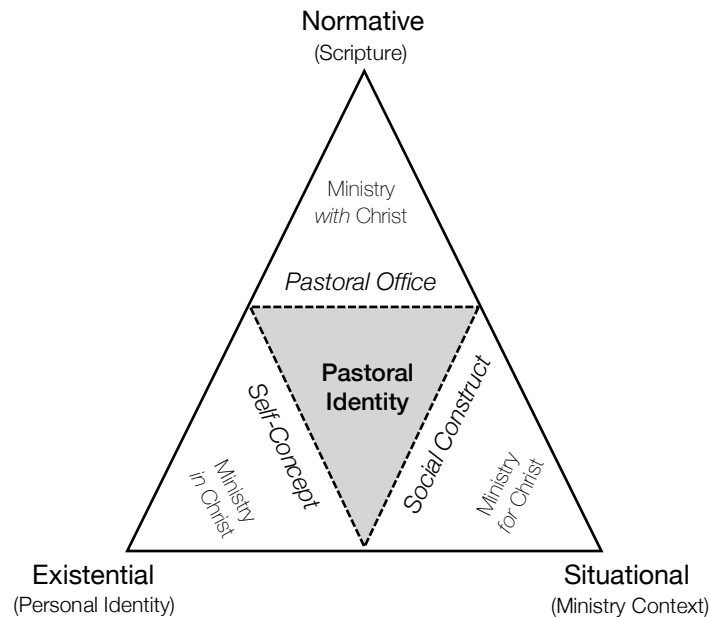


FIGURE 1: *The Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity*

First, the Triangular Model is based on the theological method of *triperspectivalism*. For ease of reference, however, the model will be referred to as *triangular*. According to John Frame, triperspectivalism is a method of “looking at theological issues from multiple perspectives, particularly a threefold set of perspectives related to the biblical doctrine of the Trinity.”<sup>107</sup> The three basic perspectives of the Frame’s method are the *normative*, the *existential*, and the *situational*. The topic under consideration is viewed from each angle to gain a multidimensional grasp of it. The result is a balanced,

107. John M. Frame, *Theology in Three Dimensions: A Guide to Triperspectivalism and Its Significance* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P& R Publications, 2017), p. xiii.



holistic understanding of a topic. It also provides a “convenient and memorable way to teach.”<sup>108</sup>

The Triangular Model of this thesis-project views pastoral identity from each of Frame’s three perspectives. In doing so, it sees pastoral identity as a multifaceted combination of pastoral office, self-concept, and social construct (see Figure 1). The three perspectives of the model—normative, existential, and situational—are credited to John Frame. But the contents of the model—pastoral office, self-concept, and social construct, etc.—are the work of this thesis-project and its author takes credit for them. Frame has applied the triperspectival method to numerous theological topics, making what he calls “triads.”<sup>109</sup> But to the author’s knowledge, John Frame has never developed a triperspectival model of pastoral identity.

The *normative* perspective of the Triangular Model views pastoral identity from the point of view of Scripture. It asks the question, “What is a pastor?” and sees pastoral identity as pastoral office. As a norm, pastoral office provides a reference point to govern the existential and situational. This proper order keeps the personality of the pastor or the demands of the context from distorting pastoral identity into something God never intended.

The *existential* perspective looks at pastoral identity from the subjective point of view of the pastor. It sees pastoral identity as a self-concept, an understanding and experience of oneself as a pastor. Here the key question is, “Who Am I?” It explains how the pastor uniquely fulfills the pastoral office with his or her personal identity. It views pastoral identity as the embodiment of the pastoral office.

The *situational* perspective of the Triangular Model looks at pastoral identity from the point of view of one’s ministry context. Pastoral identity is seen as a social construct which is embedded in the ministry context. Here the key question is, “Where am I?” This standpoint helps to contextualize one’s ministry to the facts of a concrete ministry situation and creates “fit” between pastor and people. Applied

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108. Frame, *Theology in Three Dimensions*, 78.

109. For examples, see Frame’s *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013), 1117-1124.

to pastoral identity, the social construct of identity means that my pastoral identity is more than simply what I think about myself. Pastoral identity is not created in a vacuum. It develops in dialogue with the community of faith which I serve and the larger society which I inhabit.

According to the Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity, the two dynamic elements of self-concept and the social construct interact with each other under the biblical norms about pastoral office to shape a particular pastoral identity that is expressed in the functions of pastoral ministry. Each of the three components provides a unique, essential, and complementary perspective on pastoral identity. If any one of these factors is missing, one's pastoral identity will lack authority, balance, specificity, and effectiveness. Furthermore, holding these three factors in balance prevents distortions and anchors pastoral identity in the framework of biblical norms and contextual needs. Who I am must express itself in harmony with where I am and what a pastor is.

Second, in addition to being triperspectival, the Triangular Model is also *Christ-centered*,<sup>110</sup> meaning it grounds pastoral identity in the doctrine of union with Christ.<sup>111</sup> As Thomas Oden has pointed out, "All the varied activities of the pastor have a single center: life in Christ... The center is Christ's own ministry for and through us, embodied in distortable ways through our language, through the work of our hands, and quietly through our bodily presence."<sup>112</sup> Therefore, the model helps pastors make a connection between their ministry and Christ's by looking at each aspect of pastoral identity in relation to the ministry of Christ. Union with Christ means that one's ministry is more than imitation of Christ's ministry; it is partnership and participation in *his* ministry.<sup>113</sup> Furthermore, centering the model in Christ

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110. Union with Christ brings the pastor into fellowship and partnership with the Triune God. In this sense, the model is also *trinitarian*. It relates the pastor's identity and ministry to the 'inseparable operations' of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Therefore, while ministry is done *through* Christ, it is also simultaneously *from* the Father and *by* the Spirit. But for the sake of clarity and simplicity, the model will use a Christ-centered focus. See Adonis Vidu, *The Same God Who Works All Things: Inseparable Operations in Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021) Introduction.

111. See John Jefferson Davis, "Practising Ministry in the Presence of God and in Partnership with God: The Ontology of Ministry and Pastoral Identity : A Trinitarian-Ecclesial Model," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 36, no. 2 (2012): 115-136.

112. Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (New York: Harper Collins, 1983), p. 3

113. Cf. Andrew Purves, *The Crucifixion of Ministry: Surrendering Our Ambitions to the Service of Christ* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007) and John Jefferson Davis, "Practising Ministry," 115-136.

provides a definition of pastoral identity that is theological rather than merely pragmatic, and ontological rather than merely functional.<sup>114</sup> It also curbs the individualistic tendencies so prevalent in American society by de-centering the pastor and re-orienting his or her pastoral identity around Christ.<sup>115</sup>

The normative perspective views pastoral identity as ministry *with* Christ in the pastoral office. The existential perspective sees the relationship between pastoral identity and identity *in* Christ. It shows the importance of having a clear identity in Christ that is prior to and foundational for a healthy pastoral identity. It also highlights the need for spiritual formation and maturity. Furthermore, ministering *in* Christ provides the assurance that Christ is at work through each pastor's unique combination of weaknesses, strengths, experiences, and gifts. Finally, the situational aspect looks at pastoral identity as ministry *for* Christ. It asks how pastoral identity is shaped by representing Christ as his ambassador in a particular ministry setting.

The Triangular Model also provides a simple method for assessing, discussing, and treating pastoral identity problems. Seen from the normative perspective, problems in pastoral identity are understood as a *deviation* from the scriptural norms of the pastoral office. The existential perspective shows that a pastoral identity crisis creates *distress* in the pastor and is characterized by a *deformed* self-concept and *disordered* priorities. The situational perspective explains that the pastoral identity crisis will manifest itself in *dysfunction* in ministry and relationships. Using this model, pastors and those who care for them can reflect on pastoral identity problems from each angle to better understand the problem and to make a plan for resolving the crisis. Such a plan will clarify pastoral identity by realigning with pastoral office, re-ordering and re-forming the self-concept, and restoring pastoral functioning. If all goes well, the pastor will experience a resultant alleviation of distress (See Figure 2).

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114. Davis, "Practising Ministry," 115.

115. Davis, "Practising Ministry," 120-121.

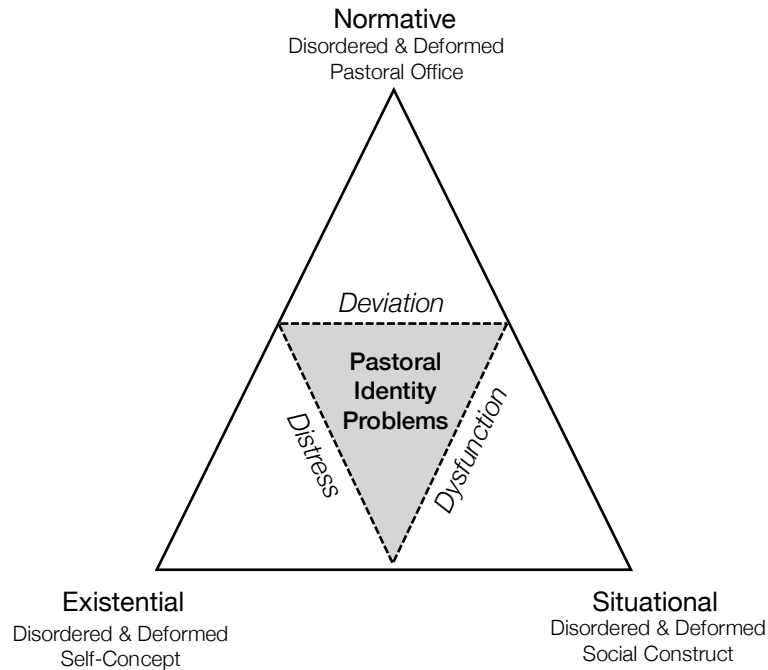


FIGURE 2: *A Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity Crises*

## 9. Thesis

This thesis-project posits that the Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity is an effective method for 1) understanding and resolving pastoral identity crises, 2) discussing and teaching the concept of pastoral identity, and 3) re-forming and enhancing pastoral identity, all of which may be useful as an intervention in the pastoral care and counseling of pastors. As indicated in the preceding pages and argued more completely in chapter three, this thesis is built on four assumptions. First, a clear and well-formed pastoral identity is key to the healthy functioning and resilience of pastors. Second, most pastors experience one or more pastoral crises (or adjustments) throughout the course of their ministry. Third, a malformed or de-formed pastoral identity is a contributing or complicating factor in much pastoral pathology. Fourth, most pastoral problems impact pastoral identity and vice versa.<sup>116</sup>

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116. Other general assumptions of this thesis-project are: (1) *pastoral* identity is analogous to, yet distinct from, *personal* identity, and therefore discoveries in the behavioral sciences are useful in understanding pastoral identity; (2) pastoral identity, whether conscious or unconscious, is an important factor in pastoral functioning; (3) there is a reciprocal relationship between pastoral problems and pastoral identity; (4) a malformed or de-formed pastoral identity is a contributing or complicating

## 10. Methodology

To test this thesis, the Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity just described was developed. Then a four-lesson curriculum was created to teach this model to a select group of pastors, to discuss its applications, and to test its usefulness as an intervention. The first lesson introduced the topic of pastoral identity and the pastoral identity model. The remaining three lessons focused on each of the three perspectives of the model (normative, existential, situational). The curriculum was presented at a half-day seminar in a scenic room overlooking the Intracoastal Waterway. It was designed to be a mini-retreat. Short breaks in between lessons and lunch after the seminar allowed the participants to get to know each, share a little about their experiences in ministry, and to discuss their reactions to the content.

The usefulness of the curriculum and its model was assessed using a pre-test and post-test. The pre-test was based on the learning objectives of each lesson. It served as an assessment *for* learning to gauge participant's attitudes toward, understandings of, and status of pastoral identity. The post-test was shaped by the thesis and asked questions intended to gauge the effectiveness and usefulness of the curriculum. It acted as an assessment *of* learning. The pre-test and post-test gathered both qualitative and quantitative data. The tests were created in Google Forms and sent to the participants via email before and after the pilot group seminar. Responses were anonymous.

The pilot group format was chosen because several authors recommend peer cohorts as an important and effective part of a pastor's support system.<sup>117</sup> It was comprised of an interdenominational cohort of twelve pastors from churches in Wilmington, NC. They represented various denominations and traditions. The curriculum was presented in a four-hour seminar. Each lesson consisted of thirty minutes of presentation followed by twenty minutes of guided group discussion. The format included min-lectures; a slide-show with graphics, quotes, and outlines; and group discussion questions.

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factor in much pastoral pathology (5) a well-formed pastoral identity can aid the overall resilience and wellbeing of pastors; (6) pastors are valuable and accurate sources for researching the dynamics of pastoral identity; (7) pastors will answer surveys and interviews accurately and the results of such research will accurately reflect the dynamic of pastoral identity; (8) the sample of pastors is valid and the participants will have experienced similar phenomena; and (9) participants will have a sincere interest in participating.

117. Bratcher, *Walk-On Water Syndrome*, 111-112; cf. also Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry*, 282-295.

## CHAPTER II: THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Chapter I introduced the Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity (Figure 1).

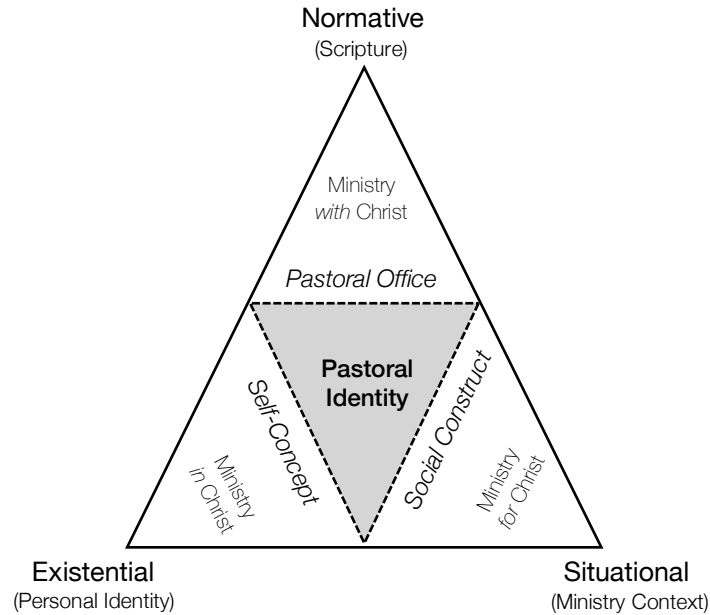


FIGURE 1: *The Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity*

Now a theological framework will be provided for the model. First, a theological view of identity will be presented as the basis for the existential perspective of the model and as an analogy for the model as a whole. Next, the doctrine of union with Christ will be considered, showing that it serves as a significant theological linkage between Christ and the pastor. Then, the doctrine of the pastoral office will be surveyed as the framework for the normative perspective of the model. It will be held up as a fixed point of reference for the formation of the pastor's self-concept and the social construction of the pastor's identity. After that, a threefold view of calling will be laid out to support the model from all three perspectives. Inward, outward, and providential callings combine to give a 'sense' of calling that instills pastoral identity with legitimacy, confidence, and authenticity. Then, three aspects of pastoral authority, which correspond to each of the viewpoints of the model, will be set forth as an integral part of pastoral identity and functioning. It will be shown that a healthy pastoral identity requires the pastor to be aware of official authority, to cultivate personal authority, to earn contextual authority, and to gain proficiency in

exercising each beneficially. Finally, the messianic identity of Jesus will be examined as a case study in optimal pastoral identity.

## 1. Personal Identity

Identity is a complex and controversial topic that has been thoroughly studied and rigorously debated.<sup>1</sup> The result is a variety of theories and a vast body of literature.<sup>2</sup> What follows is a brief, theological reflection on identity in dialogue with other disciplines. This is not a novel approach. Since the patristic period, it has been common for Christian thinkers to rely *primarily* but *not exclusively* on the Scriptures to formulate a doctrine of identity.<sup>3</sup> Even today, insights from psychology, sociology, and philosophy are often integrated into biblical and theological studies on identity.

Chapter one described a chronic pastoral identity crisis in the Church. Many writers have also observed a similar personal identity crisis in society. Brian Tucker and John Koessler have written, “We live in a day and age when nearly every sector of our culture seems to be embroiled in an identity crisis.”<sup>4</sup> Brian Rosner concurs, “Ours is a day of identity angst.... It is harder to know who you are today than at any point in history.”<sup>5</sup> Because of the current identity angst in both church and culture, pastors face the double challenge of forming personal and pastoral identities. Sometimes the truth of one’s identity is forgotten, obscured, or difficult to believe.<sup>6</sup> But no one can have a healthy pastoral identity without knowing and remembering who they are as persons.

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1. Michael F. Bird, *Evangelical Theology, Second Edition: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction* (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2020), 760, ProQuest Ebook Central; Richard Bauckham, *The Bible in the Contemporary World: Hermeneutical Ventures* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015), 138, Kindle Edition.

2. Jenny McGill, *Religious Identity and Cultural Negotiation: Toward a Theology of Christian Identity in Migration*. American Society of Missiology Monograph Series, v. 29 (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2016), 16, ProQuest Ebook Central; Bird, *Evangelical Theology*, 760.

3. Robert Louis Wilken, “Biblical Humanism: The Patristic Convictions,” in *Personal Identity in Theological Perspective*, eds. Richard Lints, Michael S. Horton, and Mark R. Talbot (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 14.

4. Brian J. Tucker and John Koessler, *All Together Different: Upholding the Church's Unity While Honoring Our Individual Identities* (Moody Publishers, 2018), chap. 1, ProQuest Ebook Central.

5. Brian S. Rosner, *Known by God: A Biblical Theology of Personal Identity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017). 245.

6. Tucker and Koessler, *All Together Different*, chap. 2.

### *Modern Terms and Biblical Concepts*

The term “identity” is a relatively young word.<sup>7</sup> It first emerged in the English usage during the Enlightenment period in philosophy and mathematics. It did not enter regular usage, however, until the 1950s when it became a popular term in the social sciences.<sup>8</sup> This explains why it doesn’t appear in the standard English Bible translations. But it would be a mistake to assume that the absence of the word ‘identity’ from English translations means that the concept is not in the Bible or that it only entered theology recently.<sup>9</sup>

Though not necessarily a biblical term, identity is certainly a biblical concept. Its presence can be traced throughout the entirety of the canon.<sup>10</sup> As Brian Rosner explains, “Teaching about humanity and personal identity appears everywhere in Scripture, but it is rarely the main focus.”<sup>11</sup> The recurrent biblical questions of “Who is the Lord?” (Exod 5:2), “What is man?” (Ps 8:4), “Who am I?” (Exod 3:11; 2 Sam 7:18), and “Who do you say I am? (Matt 16:15) are all questions that the Bible repeatedly asks and definitively answers. And they all have to do with *identity*. From the opening chapters of Genesis until the closing verses of Revelation, the Scriptures reveal the identity of God and humanity. This enables each person to find satisfying answers to the penultimate question of “Who am I?” in light of the ultimate question of “Who is God?” Scripture provides a theology of identity which implies that “God has certain intentions for humanity” and “by considering these intentions, humanity may understand its identity.”<sup>12</sup>

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7. Philip Gleason, “Identifying Identity: A Semantic History,” *The Journal of American History* 69, no. 4 (1983): 910–31. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1901196>.

8. Gleason, “Identifying Identity,” 910.

9. Klyne Snodgrass, *Who God Says You Are: A Christian Understanding of Identity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 7, Kindle.

10. For biblical theology studies that trace the theme of identity throughout the canon, see Richard Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and Its Inversion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015) and Brian S. Rosner, *Known by God: A Biblical Theology of Personal Identity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017).

11. Rosner, *Known by God*, 33.

12. McGill, *Religious Identity*, 101.



### *Christian Definitions of Personal Identity*

The complexity and elusiveness of the subject has made most authors reticent to put forth a Christian definition of personal identity. As Lints observes, “‘Identity’ is a term with a thousand different connotations, but few know its precise denotation.”<sup>13</sup> Identity defies simple explanation.

Brian Rosner, for one, has defined identity in terms of being known by God. He asserts, “[U]ltimately, being known by God is the key to personal identity.... [T]he Bible’s most complete answer to the question of identity for believers in Christ is that we are God’s children.”<sup>14</sup> New Testament scholar Klyne Snodgrass has defined it as “the sum of everything that pertains to us and shapes us. Identity is that sense of being and self-understanding that frames our actions, communicates to others who we are, and sets the agenda for our acts.”<sup>15</sup> Others, like Jenny McGill, look to other disciplines for definitions which harmonize with their theology. She borrows a definition of identity as “the totality of a person’s self-conception and includes one’s beliefs about oneself, one’s roles, and one’s group memberships.”<sup>16</sup>

### *Identity Markers and the True Self in Christ*

A biblical view of identity requires more than a concise definition, however. One must also consider its various components. When people answer the question, “Who am I?” they usually point to certain identity markers. Brian Rosner has identified eleven traditional markers that function as “essential dimensions” of identity: race, ethnicity, and nationality; culture; gender and sexuality; physical and mental capacity; family of origin; age; relationships; occupation; possessions; religion; and personality and character.<sup>17</sup> Rosner also shows how each is attested in Scripture. Klyne Snodgrass, on the other hand, lists nine factors which form personal identity: You are your body, your history, your relations, your

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13. Richard Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and Its Inversion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 11.

14. Rosner, *Known by God*, 245.

15. Snodgrass, *Who God Says You Are*, 12.

16. McGill, *Religious Identity*, 11, 16.

17. Rosner, *Known by God*, chap. 3.

mind, your commitments, your actions, your boundaries, an ongoing process of change, and your future.<sup>18</sup>

The unique combination of these markers constitutes one's identity and accounts for the uniqueness of each person.

These identity markers are an important part of identity, and pastors do well to consider them. However, none of them should become all-important, especially for the Christian. Brian Rosner writes, "[t]he Bible confirms the legitimacy of the standard personal identity markers, but denies their ultimacy."<sup>19</sup> According to Rosner, the only sure foundation for identity is to know and be known by God. Most Christian studies of identity make the same point, rightly emphasizing identity "in Christ" as the dominant identity factor for Christians. When it comes to personal and pastoral identity, what pastors need more than anything else is to know their "true self in Christ."<sup>20</sup>

Due to the influence of postmodern philosophy and the media-driven culture of today, it is now common to speak of multiple identities (or selves).<sup>21</sup> That is, each person has a variety of identities, each of which is activated by a particular role or situation.<sup>22</sup> To maintain some sense of integration, individuals must find a way to organize these sub-identities into a hierarchy governed by a "master identity."<sup>23</sup> Jenny McGill writes,

While individuals possess multiple identities of varying importance, they typically give precedence to one central identity and organize the others in relation to it. They pass all their decisions through the grid of one of these life themes... which creates a semblance of internal coherence. For the Christian, Christ becomes this definitive agent that determines personal identity.... Conversion is a spiritual process in which God calls one to depart and to follow Christ, and this process reorients

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18. Snodgrass, *Who God Says You Are*, 6-28.

19. Rosner, *Known by God*, 42, 64

20. David G. Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2015), 17, 83-97.

21. Snodgrass, *Who God Says You Are*, 8. See also Samuel Park, *Pastoral Identity as Social Construction*, chapter 4, for a detailed discussion of the postmodern view of identity. He explains that "[p]ostmodern identities are relational, produced by their socio-historical, opposed to the idea of a core self, always in progress, at times unconsciously operated, and relatively provisional."

22. Tucker and Koessler, *All Together Different*, chap. 3.

23. Tucker and Koessler, *All Together Different*, chap. 3.

one's personal identity. Determinant factors of identity such as relationships..., habits, language, and motivations become subject to Christ.<sup>24</sup>

To make the same point, Tucker and Koessler use the illustration of a Russian nesting doll to insist that “all other personal identities should be nested under our identity as a Christian.”<sup>25</sup>

In summary, there are many factors that make up personal identity, but only one is paramount: *identity in Christ*. Therefore, strengthening one's knowledge of one's true self in Christ must be a top priority for pastors. While pastors should understand how different identity markers contribute to their personal identity, they also need to keep each marker in its proper, relative place under Christ in the identity hierarchy. Tim Keller explains, “The Christian who makes Christ and his love the core of his or her identity, then, discovers that we need not completely reject other identity factors.... They are no longer the ultimate basis for our significance and security, but that does not mean they are flattened or eliminated. Rather we are free to enjoy them as God's gifts to us, but we are no longer enslaved to them as our saviors.”<sup>26</sup> Other identity markers are God's gifts to enjoy, but only Christ should be the core of one's identity.

### *Identity and the Imago Dei*

Identity involves more than the question, “Who am I?” In a sense, there is a prior question that must be asked: “What is man?” Consequently, most theological discussions of identity begin with the *imago dei* and the account of humanity's creation in the image and likeness of God in the opening chapters of Genesis. Commenting on Genesis 1:26-27, Richard Lints explains, “The importance attached to this fundamental text pervades most theological treatments of human identity.”<sup>27</sup> Robert Louis Wilken concurs, “There are of course many ways to speak about the human person, but for Christians the most

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24. McGill, *Religious Identity*, chap 6.

25. Tucker and Koessler, *All Together Different*, chap. 3.

26. Timothy Keller, *Making Sense of God* (New York: Penguin, 2016), 150.

27. Richard Lints, “Introduction: Theological Anthropology in Context,” in *Personal Identity in Theological Perspective*, eds. Richard Lints, Michael Scott Horton, and Mark R Talbot (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub, 2006), 4.

familiar, the most biblical, and the most comprehensive is, ‘made in the image of God.’”<sup>28</sup>

Theological reflection and debate have led to several views of the *imago dei*. Michael Bird summarizes the arguments in terms of four categories of likeness: substantive, relational, functional, and royal.<sup>29</sup> But Richard Lints posits the one concept of *reflection* for making sense of the *imago dei*.<sup>30</sup> He argues that the language of Genesis 1 and 2 supplies a hermeneutical principle for reading the rest of the canon rather than theological content concerning the meaning of the *imago dei*. In other words, humanity is made in the image of God to reflect God as in a mirror. The various views persist because the *imago dei* is a multifaceted concept. Yet Lints’ approach provides the best way to integrate these various facets. In other words, the *imago dei* enables humanity to reflect God’s being and purposes in a covenantal relationship through its substantive, functional, relational, and royal characteristics.<sup>31</sup>

An important question about the *imago dei* has to do with the Fall’s impact on it. Theologians conclude one of two things. It was either lost completely, or it was damaged but retained. The latter view has been standard since the patristic period and seems most consistent with Scripture.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, people still bear the image of God despite sin’s corruption. Yet because of the Fall, the *imago dei* needs to be restored through salvation by putting on the “new self” (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10) and being conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18). Related to this, it is customary for theologians to define the *imago dei*, even in Genesis, with reference to Christ as the perfect image of God (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15) and the archetype of humanity.<sup>33</sup> For the Christian, therefore, being created in the image of God and conformed to the image of Christ represent the same ultimate identity marker; and it is through creation and redemption that this identity is established, restored, and maintained. This suggests that identity has a

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28. Wilken, “Biblical Humanism,” 28.

29. Bird, *Evangelical Theology*, 744-752.

30. Lints, *Identity and Idolatry*, 22.

31. For the covenantal aspect of the *imago dei* see Michael Horton, “Post-reformation Reformed Anthropology,” in *Personal Identity in Theological Perspective*, eds. Richard Lints, Michael Scott Horton, and Mark R. Talbot (Grand Rapids, MI William B. Eerdmans Pub, 2006), 56-57.

32. Wilken, “Biblical Humanism,” 21.

33. Wilken, “Biblical Humanism,” 23.

narrative quality.

### *Identity and the Biblical Narrative*

Some Christian descriptions of identity helpfully underscore its narrative quality. A quote by Richard Bauckham provides an excellent example. He writes,

The self is a unique and particular center of personal identity that can be characterized as relational and narrational.... It is narrational in that it is formed in and through time and finds its unique identity in a story with past, present, and expected future.... I am who I am in my relationships with others, and I am who I become in the narrative of my life. From the Christian perspective, I believe, these make me who I really and truly am, the self that, redeemed and healed in every way, God will finally take into eternity.<sup>34</sup>

The narrative nature of identity means that identity is shaped by *redemptive-history*. Christian studies of identity usually form a composite picture of human nature from the major epochs in redemptive history. Richard Lints writes, “It is not uncommon to find in theological texts, the outlines of redemption as a means to frame the development or devolution of the *imago dei*. The theological outline goes something like this: created in God’s image, distorted by the fall, redeemed by Christ, and finally consummated by God.”<sup>35</sup> This fourfold understanding of human identity goes back to the time of Augustine and provides “breadth and range to our self-perceptions” and alertness “to the totality of biblical teaching about the self – not just the self in other eras yet to come or long past, but the self here and now.”<sup>36</sup> Rather than simply providing a historical timeline of humanity, these four movements in redemptive history say something all-at-once about a believer’s identity as created, fallen, redeemed, and destined for glory.<sup>37</sup> The redemptive-historical narrative becomes a schema for describing a biblical definition of human identity.<sup>38</sup>

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34. Bauckham, *The Bible in the Contemporary World*, 138-139.

35. Lints, “Introduction: Theological Anthropology in Context,” 4.

36. Michael Allen, “Sources of the Self: The Distinct Makings of the Christian Identity,” *Reformed Faith & Practice: The Journal of Reformed Theological Seminary* 5, no. 1 (May 2020): 20-21, <https://journal.rts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Cumulative-5.1-w-cover.pdf>

37. Allen, “Sources of the Self,” 20-21.

38. Allen, “Sources of the Self, 20-21.”

This also means that identity is shaped by the narrative of an individual's *personal story*. Much of one's identity is derived from locating oneself in the present between one's past and future. As Bruce Waltke has pointed out, identity is "formed by two factors: memory and destiny."<sup>39</sup> Jenny McGill explains that narrative identity is "the ongoing, developing self-story that one tells to oneself."<sup>40</sup> It is not surprising then that one's history shapes identity. Yet the future is equally formative, especially when it is seen as one's destiny. Snodgrass explains, "Identity casts a shadow forward.... Whatever it is, our concept of the future pulls us and shapes us.... *The self is an anticipated self*."<sup>41</sup>

Identity is formed by the people, places, and stories with which one identifies.<sup>42</sup> By identifying with the narrative plot and characters of the Scriptures, a pastor weaves his personal story into the larger story of redemption. Making this link with the backstory and narrative arc<sup>43</sup> of the Scriptures profoundly impacts the pastor's personal and pastoral identity.

### *Identity as Individual and Social, Constructed and Created*

Christian statements of identity usually balance individual and social factors. A biblical tension between identity as self-concept and identity as social construction is often noted. The theologian Kevin Vanhoozer, for example, insists that "The human creature is neither an autonomous individual nor an anonymous unit that has been assimilated into some collectivity, but rather a particular person who achieves a concrete identity in relation to others. Human beings are inherently social."<sup>44</sup> Susan Grove Eastman sees a similar tension in the anthropology of Paul: "Indeed, whether Paul even thought in terms of persons is a debated question. I think that he did, but not with an abstract or individualistic concept

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39. Bruce K. Waltke and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 13.

40. McGill, *Religious Identity*, chap. 2.

41. Snodgrass, *Who God Says You Are*, 20.

42. Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself*, 100.

43. Rosner, *Known by God*, 177, 182.

44. Kevin Vanhoozer, "Human Being, Individual and Social," in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 174-75.

‘person.’ Rather, he displays a functional understanding of human beings as relationally constituted agents who are both embodied and embedded in their world.”<sup>45</sup> Scripture depicts persons as individual agents who are inextricably linked with their social structure and relationships.

It is common today to speak of constructing identity, as if each person can create for themselves the identity of their choosing. Identity is sometimes even approached as a do-it-yourself project.<sup>46</sup> However, whereas people in the pre-modern world had very little control over their identity, people today assume they have too much. Klyne Snodgrass clarifies,

We delude ourselves about how much we construct our own identity. Especially in our culture we assume that we as individuals are in control of our own identity and that we will be whoever we wish. That at best is partly true, and at times only marginally so. Much of our identity we do not choose, and we have little control over it; it is given to us. For all nine factors [of identity], to varying degrees, we have to say part is given and part is chosen.<sup>47</sup>

Like Snodgrass, Michael Bird sees identity as both ascribed and acquired: “Identity can be ascribed externally on the basis of things like race and age or acquired by activity, assent, and assimilation to the characteristics of a particular group.”<sup>48</sup>

On a purely human level, identity construction is a process of combining inherited characteristics with other traits which are selected or developed within the limited options of one’s social context. From a theological point of view, identity is a gift from God rather than the creation of man. As Benner writes, “Identity is never simply a creation. It is always a discovery. True identity is always a gift from God.”<sup>49</sup> Much of self-directed identity creation is motivated by a desire for uniqueness, approval, or significance. Yet in Benner’s words, only receiving the gift of one’s “true identity in Christ” offers the type of uniqueness that is grounded and fulfilling.<sup>50</sup>

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45. Susan Grove Eastman, *Paul and the Person: Reframing Paul's Anthropology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), 2.

46. Rosner, *Known by God*, 245.

47. Snodgrass, *Who God Says You Are*, 13.

48. Bird, *Evangelical Theology*, 760.

49. Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself*, 45.

50. Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself*, 17-18.

## 2. Union with Christ

Union with Christ is a prominent New Testament theme dealing with the spiritual bond that unites Christ and believers.<sup>51</sup> Jesus revealed it when he promised, “On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you” (John 14:20 NIV11). Despite his profuse and recurrent expositions of it, at one point Calvin distills its meaning to “whatever is [Christ’s] may be called ours.”<sup>52</sup> Berkhof defines it well as “that intimate, vital, and spiritual union between Christ and His people, in virtue of which He is the source of their life and strength, of their blessedness and salvation.”<sup>53</sup> Union with Christ enables all the redemptive benefits and blessings of Christ to be credited to, applied to, and experienced by the Christian (cf. Eph 1:3).

The importance of this doctrine for salvation is frequently noted, but its significance for identity in general and pastoral identity in particular is often overlooked. It is conspicuously absent from most works in the fields of practical theology and pastoral care. Yet union with Christ is significant for pastoral identity in that it constitutes the spiritual and theological linkage between the pastor and Christ.

As for its influence on personal identity, sociological and theological theories of identity often emphasize that identity comes *extra se*, or “from the outside.”<sup>54</sup> This means that “one’s sense of self is dependent on the ‘generalized other.’”<sup>55</sup> Stanley Grenz claims that this is a “shared conclusion” between sociology and theology.<sup>56</sup> Identity originates *extra se* because “being ‘in Christ’ entails participating in the narrative of Jesus” as an “identity-constituting narrative.”<sup>57</sup> As with personal identity, union with Christ shapes pastoral identity by uniting pastors to the defining meta-narrative of the person and work of Christ.

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51. Sinclair Ferguson points out Old Testament backgrounds of union with Christ in such concepts and institutions as federal headship, the covenant, marriage, the priesthood, the sacrificial system, and the Suffering Servant in Isaiah. *The Christian Life: A Doctrinal Introduction* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2001), 105-107.

52. Calvin, *Institutes*, 1362 [IV. xvii. 2].

53. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2003), 449.

54. Grenz, “The Social God,” 91; Klyne Snodgrass, *Who God Says You Are: A Christian Understanding of Identity* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), chap. 1, Kindle.

55. Grenz, “The Social God,” 91.

56. Grenz, “The Social God,” 91

57. Grenz, “The Social God,” 92.



Andrew Purves is one author who recognizes that “union with Christ is a key doctrine for practical theology and the faithful practice of ministry.”<sup>58</sup> He notes that union with Christ means that ministry is *participation* with Christ and not merely *imitation* of Christ.<sup>59</sup> That is, union with Christ relates the pastor’s ministry to Christ’s ministry which is continuing and present, not completed and past.<sup>60</sup> Purves claims, “The conclusion is irresistible: there is only one ministry, that of Jesus Christ, to which we are joined.”<sup>61</sup> Purves also observes that the loss of union with Christ in practical theology has two consequences: “(1) the collapsing of ministry to the moral influence of Jesus and (2) the reduction of ministry to programs, strategies, and techniques. When the continuing and present ministry of Jesus Christ is lost, we are cast back on our own resources, and ministry becomes what we do.”<sup>62</sup>

Another theologian, John Jefferson Davis, believes that union with Christ should be “at the core of a biblical doctrine of ministry” and “is a fundamental basis for the pastor’s self-identity.”<sup>63</sup> Davis continues, “The mystical union with Christ does not involve the destruction of human individuality, but its transformation and renewal in the context of a new relationship lived in interdependence with Christ; union with Christ is not the end of individuality per se, but rather the end of atomistic and autonomous individuality.”<sup>64</sup> The implication for pastoral identity is that the pastor remains an individual but lives in dependence upon Christ (cf. Gal 2:20; 2 Cor 5:15). Like Purves, Davis points to participation in the continuing ministry of Christ: “Christ’s priestly work of atonement is finished, but his kerygmatic ministry continues.”<sup>65</sup> Pastors participate in this kerygmatic ministry by virtue of their union with Christ.

Paul’s letters reveal that union with Christ had a profound impact on his pastoral identity. He

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58. Andrew Purves, *The Crucifixion of Ministry: Surrendering Our Ambitions to the Service of Christ* (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 100.

59. Purves, *The Crucifixion of Ministry*, 107.

60. Purves, *The Crucifixion of Ministry*, 111.

61. Purves, *The Crucifixion of Ministry*, 108.

62. Purves, *The Crucifixion of Ministry*, 111.

63. John Jefferson Davis, “Practising Ministry in the Presence of God and in Partnership with God: The Ontology of Ministry and Pastoral Identity: A Trinitarian-Ecclesial Model,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 36, no. 2 (2012): 127-128.

64. Davis, “Practising Ministry,” 128, n37.

65. Davis, “Practising Ministry,” 126.

claimed to speak ‘in Christ’ (2 Cor 2:17; cf. also 12:19; 13:3). Furthermore, Paul is aware of Christ’s power working in his weakness (2 Cor 12:8-10; 13:4). Paul elsewhere mentions that God was at work powerfully in him (and Peter) to make their respective ministries productive (Gal 2:8; cf. Col 1:29). In his letter to the Romans, Paul attributes his success to “what Christ has accomplished through me” (Rom 15:18 NIV11). His union with Christ prevented Paul from “losing heart” despite the many difficulties he endured (2 Cor 4:1, 16).

Finally, union with Christ makes pastoral identity ‘ecclesial.’ Joined to Christ, the pastor is also interconnected with other Christians in the communion of the saints. Paul makes this clear when he writes, “For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body” (1 Cor 12:13 NIV11). Davis contends that union with Christ replaces the old, independent self with a new, interdependent self.<sup>66</sup> Stanley Grenz has termed this the “ecclesial self.” He explains that “those who by the Spirit are in the Son participate in the very *perichoretic* dynamic that characterizes the eternal divine life. This participation constitutes the self-in-community of all who are ‘in Christ,’ thereby transforming the relational self into the ecclesial self.”<sup>67</sup> Union with Christ makes pastoral identity “ecclesial,” bringing the pastor into interdependence with God *and* the body of Christ.

### 3. Pastoral Office

The pastoral office is essential for the wellbeing of the Church and integral to pastoral identity. A doctrine of pastoral office compiles all the biblical information about the pastor-teacher (Eph 4:11) and provides a “systematic definition of the pastoral office and its function”<sup>68</sup> Whereas most discussions of pastoral identity focus on the uniqueness or individuality of the pastor, pastoral office counterbalances such discussions by standardizing what ought to be common among all. Five pairs of topics are essential to any doctrine of the pastoral office. They are 1) *calling and qualifications*, 2) *preparation and*

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66. Davis, “Practising Ministry,” 131.

67. Grenz, “The Social God,” 92.

68. Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (New York: Harper Collins, 1983), x.

ordination, 3) *authority and accountability*, 4) *responsibilities and duties*, and 5) *purposes and goals*. A pastor must have answers to the key questions of each of these topics.

Several kinds of biblical material are pertinent to the pastoral office. First, the New Testament applies various *titles* to the pastoral office (e.g. overseer, shepherd, elder). For the most part, they are used interchangeably in Scripture.<sup>69</sup> Second, the Old Testament *offices* of prophet, priest, and king are relevant to pastoral office.<sup>70</sup> Third, there are biblical *images* and metaphors for the pastoral office.<sup>71</sup> The image of shepherd has predominated.<sup>72</sup> Yet some argue that the servant (aka “minister”) image is the most inclusive and unifying.<sup>73</sup> Fourth, the biblical *narratives* of exemplary leaders, such as Jesus or the Apostles serve as instructive models. Finally, the *didactic* passages provide clear, authoritative instructions for the pastoral office in terms of commands, principles, and goals.

Pastoral office, however, is built on more than biblical texts. It also looks to the Church’s body of tradition. Thomas Oden explains, “pastoral theology is attentive to that knowledge of God witnessed to in Scripture, mediated through tradition, reflected on by systematic reasoning, and embodied in personal and social experience.”<sup>74</sup> Besides the relevant sections of standard systematic theologies available, key works on pastoral theology can be consulted when forming a doctrine of pastoral office.<sup>75</sup>

In the formation of pastoral identity, the pastoral office should be normative over the pastor’s

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69. Calvin, *Institutes*, 1060 [IV.iii.8].

70. John E. Johnson, “The Old Testament Offices as a Paradigm for Pastoral Identity,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152 (April-June 1995): 185.

71. The most commonly referenced are: Shepherd (Eph 4:11); Minister (1 Cor 4:1; Mark 10:45); Farmer/Sower (Matt. 13:3; 1 Cor. 3:6-9); Teacher (Eph. 4:11); Steward (1 Cor 4:1); Mother/Father (1 Thess. 2:7, 11); Servant/Slave (Mark 10:45); Architect/Builder (1 Cor. 3:10); Watchman (Ezek. 3:17; 33:1-6; Acts 20:26-27); Ambassador (2 Cor 5:20); Preacher/Herald (2 Tim. 1:11); Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37); Soldier (2 Tim. 2:3-4); Fishermen (Mark 1:17); Physician (Matt. 9:12).

72. Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 50; Brian Vaughn. “Pastoral Office” in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, ed. Rodney J. Hunter, ed, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 859.

73. Niebuhr and Williams, *Ministry in Historical Perspectives*, ix, 1-2.

74. Niebuhr and Williams, *Ministry in Historical Perspectives*, ix, 1-2.

75. Recommended Works: Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 2: In Defense of His Flight to Pontus* (Patristic Period); John Chrysostom, *Six Books on the Priesthood* (Patristic Period); Gregory the Great, *The Book of Pastoral Rule* (590), Martin Bucer, *Concerning the True Care of Souls* (1538); Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (1659); Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry* (1830); A. Vinet, *Pastoral Theology* (1854); Patrick Fairbairn, *Pastoral Theology: A Treatise on the Offices and Duties of a Christian Pastor* (1875); Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials in Ministry* (1983); David L. Larsen, *Caring for the Flock: Pastoral Ministry in the Local Church* (1991); Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church* (esp. Chapter 17) in the *Contours of Christian Theology* series (1995); Andrew Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology: A Christological Foundation* (2004).

self-concept and social construction. Whether intentionally selected or passively accepted, something will serve as a norm. Pastoral identity will be determined by one of three things: 1) the urgencies, exigencies, and expectations of ministry context; 2) the personality, opinions, and preferences of the pastor; or 3) the images, instructions, and principles of the Bible. Objective facts and subjective experience need to be calibrated against scriptural norms to prevent distortions and enhance clarity.

As a normative perspective, pastoral office benefits pastoral identity in several, practical ways. It helps pastors define ‘success’ and measure progress. It also provides boundaries for the pastor’s person, time, and efforts, and aids the pastor in setting priorities. In addition, it instills confidence and promotes authenticity by endorsing the pastor as a representative of God and the Church. Moreover, it aids decision-making and supports conflict management. Finally, it guides the pastor in the management of expectations.

#### **4. Calling to the Ministry**

Pastoral identity needs a clear ‘sense’ of calling that is rooted in a biblical doctrine of calling. David Fisher writes, “While a vague call to Christian ministry may lead to the pastorate, it will not sustain a pastor through the harsh realities of church life. My call to ministry needed specific pastoral content.”<sup>76</sup> A sense of calling fortifies the pastor with legitimacy, authenticity, and confidence necessary to serve as a representative of God.

Thomas Oden, lamenting the “atrophied concept of ‘*call to ministry*’” in modern times, called for it to be “thoroughly restudied and reconceived as a hinge concept of the pastoral office.”<sup>77</sup> Whenever calling is atrophied, pastoral identity will be anemic on account of an unclear connection to the pastoral office. To be specific, though, the doctrine of calling is just one of three hinge concepts on which the door of the pastoral office swings. The other two are preparation and ordination. These three hinges open the

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76. David C. Fisher, *21st Century Pastor: A Vision Based on the Ministry of Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), chap. 5, Kindle.

77. Thomas C. Oden “Recovering Lost Identity,” *Journal of Pastoral Care* 34, no. 1 (1980): 16; See also Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church*, 63.

doorway into the pastoral office, a crucial threshold for establishing pastoral identity.

To use a different metaphor, pastoral identity is conceived in calling and born at ordination. In between is a brief period of gestation (e.g. seminary, internship, etc). At ordination, the pastor is ‘born’ into the pastoral office, and pastoral identity begins the life-long process of development. Pastors carry the memory of the seminal event of calling through ministry to remind them of who they are. As David Hansen writes, “Knowing that I am made by God to be a pastor is my call.”<sup>78</sup> Calling instills the pastor’s self-concept with a sense that they have been “begotten” by the Father to be a pastor. So, the significance of calling is not limited to how one enters pastoral office. Rather, calling undergirds pastoral identity throughout the whole course of ministry. *The State of Pastors* study concludes, “Confidence that God has called you to your work appears to be a buttress against the inevitable challenges that arise, so consider how to tend and grow reliance on the God who called you....”<sup>79</sup> Pastors who cling to their calling weather the storms of ministry.

Generally speaking, people tend to view their work on a continuum that ranges from job, to career, to craft, to calling.<sup>80</sup> Very few pastors think of their work as job or career, some think of it as craft, but a majority see it as a calling.<sup>81</sup> In other words, pastors see ministry as “inseparable from our true, innermost identity” and “a space where our most authentic self – our talents and skills, our values and convictions – can find its full expression.” As Clarence Schnelling explains, “The notion of call accents the idea that such persons feel chosen or selected for this particular role rather than viewing it primarily as a personal career choice.”<sup>82</sup> This view of ministry *as calling* is shaped by a pastor’s sense of *being called*.

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78. David Hansen, *The Art of Pastoring* (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 30.

79. Barna Research Group, and Pepperdine University, *The State of Pastors: How Today's Faith Leaders Are Navigating Life and Leadership in an Age of Complexity* (Ventura, CA: Barna Research Group, 2017), 58-59.

80. “Calling,” WorkWell, accessed January 21, 2022, <https://workwellresearch.org/research-projects/flourishing-in-ministry/calling/>

81. “Calling,” WorkWell, accessed January 21, 2022, <https://workwellresearch.org/research-projects/flourishing-in-ministry/calling/>

82. Clarence H. Schnelling, “The Call to Ministry,” in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, ed. Rodney J. Hunter, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990): 114.

Matt Bloom has discovered three pathways to calling.<sup>83</sup> The first is *discernment*, a path taken by many first career pastors. It unfolds “over long periods of time, often years, and followed a process of self-discovery, mentorship, imagining possible futures, and an eventual and often powerful acknowledgement of the pastoral call.”<sup>84</sup> The second path, *exploration*, is taken by many second-career pastors. It involves “a search for meaningful work” through a variety of secular jobs that leads to a call to ministry.<sup>85</sup> The third path, the *thunderous call*, is the least common and is taken by first and second career pastors.<sup>86</sup> This shorter and more dramatic path involves “unexpected and powerful moments in which individuals experienced what they understood to be divine revelation.”<sup>87</sup> All three paths can lead to an authentic pastoral identity, but the discernment path is most likely to produce a healthy pastoral identity.<sup>88</sup> Those caring for pastors should not only assess the strength and clarity on a pastor’s sense of calling, but the path he or she took to it.

A pastor’s sense of calling needs a firm foundation in Scripture. Most doctrinal formulations of calling start with a basic distinction between *general* and *special* calling.<sup>89</sup> In other words, there is a calling to salvation and service that comes to all, and there is a calling to a particular ministry that comes to a few. The *general* call is a prerequisite for ministry and essential to the pastor’s self-concept<sup>90</sup> (cf. Rom 1:6; 1 Cor 1: 2, 9). As for the *special* call, theologians since the Patristic period have subdivided it into an *inward* and an *outward* call.<sup>91</sup> Richard Niebuhr’s oft cited typology utilizes this inward/outward distinction and adumbrates four parts of the call to the ministry: 1) the call to be a Christian; 2) the secret

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83. Matt Bloom, *Flourishing in Ministry: How to Cultivate Clergy Wellbeing* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 56-66.

84. Bloom, *Flourishing in Ministry*, 56.

85. Bloom, *Flourishing in Ministry*, 57.

86. Bloom, *Flourishing in Ministry*, 57.

87. Bloom, *Flourishing in Ministry*, 57.

88. Bloom, *Flourishing in Ministry*, 56.

89. Schnelling, “The Call to Ministry,” 114.

90. Edmund P. Clowney, *Called to the Ministry* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1964), 5.

91. Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 18-25.

call; 3) the providential call; and 4) the ecclesiastical call.<sup>92</sup> Adapting Niebuhr's types, this thesis-project sees three essential aspects of the call to ministry: *inward*, *providential*, and *outward*.

The *inward* call is a "private, inward, intuitive feeling"<sup>93</sup> that comes suddenly or gradually through one's personal experience with God. It may be experienced as a godly aspiration, a burden of responsibility, or a compelling sense of purpose. Niebuhr defines it as "that inner persuasion or experience whereby a person feels himself directly summoned or invited by God to take up the work of ministry."<sup>94</sup> The inward call ranges from gentle invitation to irresistible summons. Regardless, it is always a crossroads of response.<sup>95</sup> Once tested and confirmed, this inward call adds the beneficial elements of conviction, commitment, and confidence to pastoral identity.

The *providential call* is often overlooked but formative for pastoral identity. Niebuhr depicts it as "that invitation and command to the assume the work of the ministry which comes through the equipment of a person with talents necessary for the exercise of the office and through the guidance of his life by all its circumstances."<sup>96</sup> It is built on the theological premise that "God would not call a person into ministry who was not fit for it."<sup>97</sup> As the backstory for the pastor's identity, it includes every aspect of the pastor up to the current moment. Personality, family, ethnicity, education, gifts, and experiences all combine to prepare the minister for the ministry. Providential call incorporates both negative and positive aspects because God's ultimate goal is to display his glory and grace through the pastor<sup>98</sup> (Cf. 2 Cor 4:7; cf. 2 Cor 12:7-10). Furthermore, it reaches back beyond the inward and outward call, even to before one's birth (Jer 1:5; Gal 1:15). When the inward and outward calls come, the pastor often looks back and realizes that

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92. Niebuhr, *Purpose of the Church*, 64.

93. Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 20.

94. Niebuhr, *Purpose of the Church*, 64.

95. Rohrer, *The Sacred Wilderness*, 45.

96. Niebuhr, *Purpose of the Church*, 64.

97. Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 22.

98 John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries* (Complete), trans. John King, Accordance electronic ed. (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1847), paragraph 4502.

God has been providentially preparing him for ministry all along.<sup>99</sup>

The *outward call* is the Church's endorsement of the pastor which confirms the inward and providential calls.<sup>100</sup> Niebuhr defines it as "the summons and invitation extended to a man by some community or institution of the Church to engage in the work of the ministry."<sup>101</sup> Its primary purpose is to safeguard the Church and to ensure for its wellbeing.<sup>102</sup> Nevertheless, it also has several salutary effects on pastoral identity. It contributes to the healthy formation of the pastor's self-concept and the social construction of the pastor's identity. It also offers much needed validation that sustains the pastor through the challenges of ministry and the doubts of his heart.<sup>103</sup>

Samuel Park's research adds another interesting take on calling. He found that pastoral caregivers receive various *mini-calls* that come "from care-seekers who ask for help from the pastoral person."<sup>104</sup> He writes, "Thus, pastoral identity derives not only from the primary, vertical call from God but also from specific, horizontal calls from care-seekers."<sup>105</sup> For Park, this explains in part the social construction of pastoral identity.<sup>106</sup> He explains, "When a pastoral person is not sure about his or her call from God, specific calls from others can help the person find a right direction. However, particular calls from others do not legitimate the primary call. Without a clear call from God, the pastoral caregiver may be confused by the many different callings from the care-seekers in particular needs and situations."<sup>107</sup> Though not primary, these mini-calls from parishioners can help enhance pastoral identity.

A final word should be offered on pseudo-calls and the psychological phenomena which are often mistaken for a genuine call. Samuel Proctor has emphasized the harm in entering pastoral ministry for the

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99. Eugene H. Peterson, *The Pastor: A Memoir* (New York: HarperOne, 2011), 2.

100. Niebuhr, *Purpose of the Church*, 64-65.

101. Niebuhr, *Purpose of the Church*, 64.

102. Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 22.

103. Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 22, 25.

104. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 185.

105. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 185.

106. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 185.

107. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 185.



wrong reasons: “To undertake such a vocation for light and transient reasons, to use it as a quick leap to prominence or as gratification for a boundless and pathological egocentricity is to profane it.”<sup>108</sup> Here the process of testing and investigating the call by a “responsible and responsive Christian community” is crucial.<sup>109</sup> Four guidelines should be followed. First, all parties should keep “the larger concern of the laity as their primary concern rather than personal self-actualization or some alleged inherent right to vocational self-expression.”<sup>110</sup> Second, developmental issues inherent in the candidate’s phase of life—adolescence, mid-life, etc.—should be assessed.<sup>111</sup> Third, the candidate’s sense of calling should be scrutinized in relation to their mental health to determine whether it is “related to an unconscious attempt to resolve conflicts or meet other needs within oneself or in one’s interpersonal relationships” or if it is “part of a delusional system of grandiosity, suspicion, and persecution.”<sup>112</sup> Finally, discernment should involve an assessment of “the motivational factors and how these are perceived by the candidate.”<sup>113</sup>

## 5. Pastoral Authority

As with the topic of pastoral identity, one must look to the literature of the pastoral care field for any meaningful reflection on authority. Samuel Southard defines pastoral authority as “[s]piritual power, mediated through the church to influence opinion, induce belief, and lead individuals and groups to moral and evangelical action.”<sup>114</sup> This pastoral authority is a fact of pastoral identity. It accrues to the pastor on account of his or her office, personal character, gifts, abilities, and role. Diane Langberg, a psychologist with specialization in treating victims of abuse, counsels, “If you are a Christian leader..., I pray that you

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108. Samuel D. Proctor and Gardner C. Taylor with Gary V. Simpson, *We Have This Ministry: The Heart of the Pastor’s Vocation* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1996), ix-x.

109. Edward B. Bratcher, *The Walk-On-Water Syndrome: Dealing with Professional Hazards in Ministry* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1984), 77.

110. Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 23.

111. Schnelling, “Call to Ministry,” 115.

112. Schnelling, “Call to Ministry,” 115.

113. Schnelling, “Call to Ministry,” 115.

114. Samuel Southard, “Authority, Pastoral,” in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, ed. Rodney J. Hunter (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1990), 61.

will come to understand the kinds of power—conscious and unconscious—that come with your authority. I pray that you will understand your own power and learn how to use it wisely—to bless and not to harm.”<sup>115</sup>

Pastoral authority is closely interrelated with pastoral identity.<sup>116</sup> As Edward Thornton writes, “pastoral identity flowers and with it comes the choice fruit of pastoral authority.”<sup>117</sup> It “inheres in a pastor’s prayer life and a clear identification as a representative of God, of a religious tradition, and of a specific congregation. Pastoral authority then permeates one’s gestures of caring, the rituals of ecclesiastical functioning, and the specialized services requiring exceptional competence.”<sup>118</sup> This “choice fruit” of pastoral authority grows out of pastoral identity, permeates the pastor’s functioning, and makes one’s ministry *authoritative*.

Pastoral authority and spiritual power are overlapping concepts. Simply stated, power is *ability*, but authority is the *right* to use power.<sup>119</sup> There are many kinds of power, such as verbal, physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual.<sup>120</sup> In addition, power can take many forms: persuasion, coercion, manipulation, influence, domination.<sup>121</sup> Some of these forms should never be used by a pastor. Although the proper, godly use of power and authority is a force for good, it does hold potential for great harm. The goal is to be *authoritative* without becoming *authoritarian* or *autocratic*.<sup>122</sup>

Pastoral authority is *derivative* in nature.<sup>123</sup> It all belongs to God and flows from him (Matt 28:18-

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115. Diane Langberg, *Redeeming Power: Understanding Authority and Abuse in the Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2020), Preface, paragraph 14.

116. Gary Harbaugh, *Pastor as Person: Maintaining Personal Integrity in the Choices and Challenges of Ministry* (Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 120.

117. E. E. Thornton, “Identity, Pastoral,” in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, ed. Rodney J. Hunter (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 568.

118. Thornton, “Identity, Pastoral,” 568.

119. Calvin Redekop, “Power,” in *The Concise Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, ed. Glenn H. Asquith, Jr. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), 117, 119.

120. Langberg, *Redeeming Power*, chap. 1.

121. Langberg, *Redeeming Power*, chap. 1.

122. Southard, “Authority, Pastoral,” 61.

123. Langberg, *Redeeming Power*, chap. 1.

19). This means that pastoral authority is held in trust. As stewards of Christ's authority, pastors are accountable to him for its use (1 Cor 4:1; Heb 13:17; 1 Pet 5:2-4). Jesus acknowledged that worldly rulers "lord it over" their subjects (Mark 10:42). "Not so with you," he insisted (Mark 10:43). This same mindset is reflected in the Apostle Paul's statement: "So even if I boast somewhat freely about the authority the Lord gave us *for building you up* rather than tearing you down, I will not be ashamed of it" (2 Cor 10:8 NIV11, emphasis added; cf. also 2 Cor 13:10). Pastoral authority's purpose is edification. At times it is appropriate and necessary to assert pastoral authority (1 Thess 2:6), but only in a Christlike manner for a redemptive purpose. Pastoral identity gives authority under Christ to minister like Christ.

This thesis-project identified three types of pastoral authority that are related to pastoral identity. First, *official authority* refers to the power and rights bestowed by the pastoral office. Pastors must always remain conscious of their official authority and sensitive to the power difference it creates. Even the simplest of a pastor's gestures, words, or actions bears more weight on account of this authority. Knowing how and when to assert this authority redemptively requires humility, love, and discernment.

Second, *personal authority* is the authority the pastor has as a person. It refers to the self as called, equipped, and credible. Whereas formal authority is the actual right to do work, personal authority is the "personally held, *perceived* right to do work."<sup>124</sup> The field of pastoral care and counseling usually emphasizes the pastor's self as the most valuable resource for ministry and therefore seeks to enhance personal authority by equipping and growing the self. Personal authority makes the pastor confident and pastoral identity compelling. Kincaid writes, "Pastoral authority varies from tradition to tradition, but few expressions of this authority are more compelling than the holders of pastoral office who live authentic lives that are shaped by the life of Jesus and are focused on the purposes that God holds dear."<sup>125</sup> This type of authority is not automatically bestowed by the pastoral office. It must be cultivated through one's

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124. Dan Mezick, "Authority Explained," *New Technology Solutions*, December 1, 2012, <https://newtechusa.net/authority-explained/> Emphasis added. Cf. Also Harbaugh, *Pastor as Person*, 120.

125. William B. Kincaid, *Finding Voice: How Theological Field Education Shapes Pastoral Identity* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012), 72-73.

spiritual life, education, experience, and relationships.<sup>126</sup>

Third, *contextual authority* is granted by the community in virtue the pastor's relative position within it. It must be earned. The community we inhabit will create expectations of authority and its use. Failure to assess this dynamic and respond wisely can hinder pastoral functioning. Navigating it can lead to increased fruitfulness, a more redemptive management of conflict, and increased trust between pastor and people. As David and Lisa Frisbie observe, "When a leader exhibits a high level of personal character over a long period of time, and does so within a specific and ongoing context, spiritual leadership emerges."<sup>127</sup>

One of the complicating factors in pastoral authority is that the public perception of pastors and churches has trended negatively for a long time. Hoge and Wenger have discovered four changes in Protestant ministry since the 1960s. One of these was "less trust in centralized authority" and another was "lower clerical authority."<sup>128</sup> They see two important meanings in these data. First, "authoritarian leadership by church leaders is less acceptable in 2005 than in 1960" and requires a "more collaborative and less arbitrary leadership style."<sup>129</sup> Second, "the level of respect accorded a clergy person solely due to his or her status as clergy is lower today. Clergy who are new to a given community need to prove their wisdom and leadership through their actions."<sup>130</sup>

More recent research supports their conclusions. A recent Gallup poll from July 2021 found that Americans' trust in church or organized religion has consistently declined since 1991.<sup>131</sup> In December 2020, a Gallup survey of the honesty and ethics of various professions found that clergy rated somewhere

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126. David & Lisa Frisbie, *Managing Stress in Ministry* (Kansas City, KS: Beacon Hill Press, 2014), 59.

127. Frisbie, *Managing Stress in Ministry*, 59-60.

128. Hoge and Wenger, *Pastors in Transition*, 5-9.

129. Hoge and Wenger, *Pastors in Transition*, 9.

130. Hoge and Wenger, *Pastors in Transition*, 9

131. Megan Brennan, "Americans' Confidence in Major U.S. Institutions Dips," *Gallup*, July 14, 2021, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/352316/americans-confidence-major-institutions-dips.aspx>

in the middle.<sup>132</sup> The poll also found a generational decline of trust in clergy.<sup>133</sup> From these result, Aaron Earls with Lifeway Research concludes, “The trajectory of confidence in the church as an institution mirrors the decline of trust in pastors.”<sup>134</sup> Clearly, the official authority of the pastor has eroded to the point that personal authority must restore trust in the office of pastor.

## 6. The Pastoral Identity of Jesus

By way of analogy, the messianic identity of Jesus provides a case study in optimal pastoral identity. Wayne Oates says it well:

A vision of his identity both challenged Jesus to lay down his life and at the same time gave him satisfaction that ‘the world knew not of.’ The vision must have been renewed daily in our Lord Jesus Christ through his worship in intimate communion with the Father, through his powerful interchanges with the expectations of his disciples, and through his responses to the shepherdless multitudes who sought his ministry. It can hardly be different for the Christian pastor today who, as undershepherd of the Good Shepherd, is an authentic person under God, not just a walking job description.<sup>135</sup>

As Oates indicates, a study of Christ’s earthly ministry from the angle of his messianic identity offers an instructive paradigm for understanding pastoral identity. The pastoral identity of Jesus is the gold standard. It is clearly defined, harmoniously integrated, substantially complete, and functionally resilient.

However, there are three main differences between the messianic identity of Jesus and everyone else’s pastoral identity. First, from the normative perspective, he occupies the office of *Redeemer*. Pastors, of course, do not. Also, as the Good and Chief Shepherd (John 10, 1 Pet 5), he also occupies a place of preeminence in the pastoral office. Second, from the existential perspective, the glaring distinction is that he is the incarnate *Son of God*, fully divine and fully and sinlessly human. This of course makes the comparison with pastors unequal but instructive. Pastors can learn from Jesus how to

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132. Lydia Saad, “U.S. Ethics Ratings Rise for Medical Workers and Teachers,” *Gallup*, December 22, 2021, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/328136/ethics-ratings-rise-medical-works-teachers.aspx>

133. Saad, “U.S. Ethics Ratings Rise.”

134. Aaron Earls, “Americans’ Confidence in Church Drops to Near Historic Low,” *LifeWay Research*, July 19, 2021, <https://lifewayresearch.com/2021/07/19/americans-confidence-in-church-drops-to-near-historic-low/?carid=c3277caa-c1f5-40db-b709-74d19adcd91e&profile=lifeway+research&network=facebook>

135. Wayne Oates, *The Christian Pastor*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), 129.

embrace their humanity, a challenge which has proven to be more difficult than one would expect. Third, from the situational perspective, there are the obvious peculiarities of time, place, and culture. Mindful of these differences, the *messianic* identity of Jesus will be referred to interchangeably as his *pastoral* identity for the sake of comparison.

### *The Formation of Jesus' Pastoral Identity*

When Jesus became aware of his messianic identity is a hotly debated question. Nevertheless, this thesis-project assumes that Jesus was aware of his messianic identity from at least the time of his baptism, and probably sooner (cf. Luke 2:49). Because Jesus was fully human, it is reasonable to assume that he was subject to the same process of identity formation to which all people are subject. Due to the connection in the Gospels between the baptism of Jesus and his ministry, it is reasonable to conclude that this was the most formative event for his messianic identity. The scene is lush with references to messianic identity and mission.

John's baptism of repentance (Matt 3:11) said much about Jesus' identity as the Redeemer. Whether the baptism itself expressed death and burial or simply dramatized his identification with the people as their substitute, the implications for his mission are the same. In addition, John's testimony about Jesus (Matt 3:11-12) and his pre-baptismal remarks to Jesus (Matt 3:13-14) must have reinforced for Jesus his own messianic identity and informed others about it. But more than any of this, the post-baptismal vision was the most formative for Jesus' identity. Matthew writes, "At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'" (Matthew 3:16-17 NIV11). The Holy Spirit's dove-like descent and the Father's affirming identification were a defining moment that guided everything he did and said going forward. It fortified him against the temptations of the Enemy, determined his decisions and commitments, established his priorities, influenced his relationships, and equipped him to face each challenge of ministry.

### *The Testing of Jesus' Pastoral Identity*

Most leaders in the Bible experienced some form of crisis in which their identity and calling was tested or questioned. The Lord Jesus himself was no exception. His identity was tested at least three times. Each crisis happened at pivotal moments in his ministry.

The first crisis was the *temptation in the wilderness* (Cf. Matt 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13). Satan's attacks were aimed directly at his messianic identity: "If you are the Son of God" (Matt 4:3, 6). Satan tried to get Jesus to distort the nature and purpose of his mission by instilling doubt and confusion about his identity. But Jesus successfully resisted these temptations with the Word of God, and the crisis was resolved. Only then did he begin his ministry. His identity was tested but proven in the wilderness. Pastors will often have their own wilderness experiences in which their identity is tested.

The second crisis occurred immediately after *Peter's confession*. When Jesus predicted his suffering and death, Peter rebuked Jesus for conceiving of his identity is so tragically. In return, Jesus sternly rebuked him in order to correct Peter's distorted image of Jesus' true identity. Peter's attempt to 'clarify' the mission of Jesus could have become an identity crisis for Jesus. But the Lord's strong sense of identity won out. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns." (Mark 8:33 NIV11). People will always have different visions for what a pastor should be and do. This incident from the ministry of Jesus shows that a clear pastoral identity is needed to navigate the clash of pastoral images that often occurs.

The third crisis occurred in *the Garden of Gethsemane* as Jesus wrestled with the impending agony of the Cross. William Hulme comments, "The Master Himself went through His own crisis of identity in the Garden of Gethsemane when the darkening events pointed to the Cross.... Arising from that struggle for identity in which He wrestled like Jacob with God, he was able to face Judas and the soldiers, strengthened and confirmed in his Messianic commitment."<sup>136</sup> Jesus overcame the horrors of the Cross and the temptation to be something other than the Suffering Servant by staying true to his identity

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136. William E. Hulme, *Your Pastor's Problems: A Guide for Ministers and Laymen* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966), 117.

and surrendering to the Father's will. In this scene, Jesus models the importance of prayer in pastoral identity crises. The heart of the crisis is often a wrestling match between our will and God's.

From each perspective—normative, existential, situational—Christ's pastoral identity was well-formed and tenaciously maintained. In each of these cases, his identity enabled him to resist temptation, to cope with the stresses of his calling, and to obey the Father for the salvation of his people. All this shows that a pastoral identity crisis is not always or only the result of a deficiency in the pastor. These crises are an integral part of serving God as a human being in a fallen world. Even the clearest and best-formed pastoral identity will be tested. In those times, a pastor's identity will either be strengthened or re-formed.

### *Jesus' Pastoral Identity in Action*

Everything Jesus did was a function of his messianic identity. However, two episodes most clearly illustrate how his identity determined his actions. The first is *the footwashing*. John is careful to make the connection explicit: "Jesus *knew* that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father.... Jesus *knew* that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; *so* he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist." (John 13:1–4 NIV11; emphasis added). Paul Tripp comments on how Jesus' actions were animated by his identity in this passage:

He knew exactly who he was and how this connected to his true identity and mission.... His identity, as the Son of God, didn't lead him to be arrogant and entitled, unwilling to do what needed to be done to accomplish redemption. His identity didn't cause him to assess that he was too good for the task. No, his identity motivated and propelled him to do what the disciples were convinced was below them.<sup>137</sup>

This moment is a master class in pastoral identity. Existentially, Jesus' *self-concept* led him to love his disciples through a touching display of service and humility. Normatively, he correctly understood the office of Redeemer. Situationally, his identity was *socially constructed* as he compassionately, tactfully,

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137. Paul David Tripp, *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 167.



and persuasively impressed his image of Messiah on the disciples. After negotiating their own mistaken images of the Messiah with his, they then opened their lives to him in a fresh way. In addition, all three aspects of his authority—official, personal, and contextual—converged in pastoral perfection. In one poignant moment, he contributed to the formation of their pastoral identities by modeling what it means to minister out of one’s God-given identity.

The other key event in which Jesus’ ministry was determined by his messianic identity is *the Crucifixion*. In fact, it is *the* key event. The shape of each Gospel narrative moves inexorably toward the Cross, as did Jesus’ own life and ministry. The Apostles only fully realized this in hindsight. Yet according to their accounts, Jesus was conscious of it during his ministry. Three times he predicted his arrest, suffering, and death to the disciples (Mark 8:31; 9:30-32; 10:32-34). Although he knew what awaited him in Jerusalem, he went resolutely (Luke 9:51). He did so because of identity: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45 NIV11). His final words, “It is finished” (John 19:30) did not mark the end of his suffering so much as they announced the fulfillment of his messianic identity and mission. Through a clear, well-formed pastoral identity, Jesus stayed true to the office of the Redeemer and his identity as the Son of God. Likewise, pastoral identity calls pastors to take up their cross, to stay true to their calling, and to persevere to the end of their ministry.

## CHAPTER III: LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review will start with three sections that show a broad basis of support for this thesis-project: 1) a brief survey of the development of pastoral identity studies, 2) a review of various definitions of pastoral identity, and 3) a discussion of the correlation between pastoral identity and pastoral function. Next, three sections will offer support from the literature for each of the perspectives of the Triangular Pastoral Identity Model—pastoral office, self-concept, and social construct. Finally, three more sections which inform the use of the Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity will be provided: one on pastoral formation and re-formation, one dealing with the relationship between personal and pastoral identities, and one on the assessment of pastoral identity.

### 1. The Development of Pastoral Identity Studies

The modern pastoral care movement started in the U.S. in the late 1940s after the end of World War II, although precursors were underway in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>1</sup> It drew from the disciplines of medicine, psychotherapy, and the behavioral sciences to bring specialization and innovation to pastoral care and ministerial training.<sup>2</sup> In doing so, it created institutions and programs like Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) for the clinical training of pastors and chaplains.<sup>3</sup> By the 1960s, the bewildering effects of specialized ministry on pastoral identity caught the attention of scholars and practitioners in the field and a new literature on pastoral identity emerged.<sup>4</sup> Pastoral identity studies, therefore, originated in the pastoral care movement as a response to the ambiguity chaplains and pastoral care providers experienced while serving on interdisciplinary teams in secular institutions.

This development of pastoral identity studies in the pastoral care movement paralleled the development of personal identity studies in the behavioral sciences. Pastoral care authors drew from

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1. E. Brooks Holifield, "Pastoral Care Movement," in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, ed. Rodney J. Hunter (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 845.

2. Holifield, "Pastoral Care Movement," 845.

3. Holifield, "Pastoral Care Movement," 845-846.

4. Samuel Park, *Pastoral Identity as Social Construction: Pastoral Identity in Postmodern, Intercultural, and Multifaith Contexts* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2017), 1.

concurrently evolving studies of identity to understand and describe pastoral identity. The work of Erik Erikson was particularly influential in both psychiatric and pastoral care spheres.<sup>5</sup> James Côte claims that approaches to identity since Erikson can be sorted into eight categories based on their combination of an *individual* or *social* focus and their *objective* or *subjective* emphasis.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the pastoral care literature related to pastoral identity has either a psychological or sociological focus which is then viewed from either an objectivist or subjectivist standpoint.<sup>7</sup>

Samuel Park provides a good summary of the development of pastoral identity studies. He explains that “perspectives on pastoral identity have evolved *from* an identity that a pastoral caregiver forms as a representative of God and derives from his or her own theological reflection alone *to* a sense of identity constructed from a care-giving relationship in which caregiver and seeker work mutually on theological reflection and transformation toward liberation.”<sup>8</sup> The former he refers to as the ‘traditional’ perspective, adding that it includes both romanticist and modern subtypes.<sup>9</sup> The more recent perspective he labels ‘postmodern.’ This thesis-project combines elements of both the traditional *and* postmodern views by seeking to incorporate the new insights while preserving older, enduring contributions.

## 2. Pastoral Identity Descriptions & Definitions

Pastoral identity, like its personal counterpart, defies simple explanation, and no broad consensus of understanding has emerged in the scholarly literature.<sup>10</sup> While the term, ‘pastoral identity,’ has been widely used, it has often been poorly defined, and the literature tends to presuppose a definition rather

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5. Franz L. Shostrom, “The Definition and Assessment Of Professional Identity In Clergy,” (Ph.D. diss., Kansas State University, Manhattan, KA, 1985), 2, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

6. James Côte, “Identity Studies: How Close Are We to Developing a Social Science of Identity?—An Appraisal of the Field,” *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research* 6, no. 1: 3-25, quoted in Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 25. Côte adds another set of criteria related to an approach view of the social order, but this aspect is not directly relevant to this thesis-project and for simplicity’s sake has been passed over.

7. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 10, 25.

8. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 7.

9. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 7.

10. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 2.; Cf. Shostrom, “Professional Identity In Clergy,” 1.

than provide one.<sup>11</sup> Early attempts to define it began with reflections on the meaning of the terms, ‘pastor’ and ‘pastoral.’ For example, in 1961 Homer Jernigan described pastoral identity by noting that a ‘pastoral’ person is (1) a unique person with a unique combination of abilities, energies, training, and experience; (2) one who seeks to continue in his own life the ministry of Christ; (3) a representative of God to his people; (4) a chosen representative of the Christian community; (5) a chosen leader of the Christian community; (6) one who has authority uniquely as an individual and commonly as a chosen representative and leader of the Christian community.<sup>12</sup> In 1975, David Switzer described pastoral identity by examining the meaning of the concept, ‘pastor.’ He settled on three core elements: “(a) Our awareness of ourselves as persons who are serving God as we function to help others. (b) How others respond to us when they see us as ministers, their responses both at the conscious and unconscious levels. (c) The connotation that we are full professionals, with all of what this word means as it is commonly applied to *all* professional fields.”<sup>13</sup> While lacking the precision of later definitions, authors like Switzer and Jernigan made significant contributions to the study of pastoral identity by considering what is ‘pastoral’ about a pastor.

In 1979, Thomas C. Oden addressed the convention of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC) and called for a recovery of lost identity among pastoral counselors. Although he did not define pastoral identity, he did imply that pastoral identity is a “lived out” commitment to Christian tradition and theology.<sup>14</sup> Oden is correct to insist on a normative source for pastoral identity and for that norm to be the pastoral office. However, his view is focused exclusively on pastoral office and is either unaware or dismissive of the impact of self-concept and social construction on pastoral identity.

In 1982, William Arnold described pastoral identity as a subsystem of personal identity and an

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11. Shostrom, “Professional Identity in Clergy,” 3.

12. Homer L. Jernigan, “Pastoral Counseling and the Identity of the Pastor,” *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 15, no. 4 (Winter 1961): 196-197.

13. David K. Switzer, “The Minister as Pastor and Person,” *Pastoral Psychology* 24, no. 228 (1975): 53.

14. Switzer, “The Minister,” 13.

outgrowth of commitment to a system of belief.<sup>15</sup> In doing so, he named five components of pastoral identity: awareness of personal history, faithfulness to a system, identification with God's people, acknowledging and claiming authority, and being a person.<sup>16</sup> Arnold's description takes a psychological approach from a subjectivist angle. It meshes well with the pastoral office and self-concept of the Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity but is weak on the social construction of pastoral identity.

In 1990, Edward Thornton put forward the following definition of pastoral identity: "The relatively enduring pattern of attachments, behaviors, and values characteristic of persons providing religious ministries, usually but not necessarily referring to seminarians and ordained clergypersons."<sup>17</sup> He expounds his definition by discussing three pairs of components: being and doing, attachment and commitment, and authority and competence.<sup>18</sup> He also bemoans the lack of a *wholistic* view of pastoral identity, noting that most literature focuses on either "normative images" or "functional analyses."<sup>19</sup> Ironically, his definition majors in the "functional analyses" and is devoid of the "normative images." Thornton's definition also takes a heavily sociological focus with an objectivist emphasis, saying little about the pastor's self-concept. Nevertheless, its reference to the "attachments, behaviors, and values" which make up a "relatively enduring pattern" is a good contribution.

A few years later in 1993, John Patton defined pastoral as "something that can be discerned as an inner awareness of being a duly authorized representative of a Christian community of faith."<sup>20</sup> Patton's definition is a good example of the traditional approach. It does hint at the sociological component of identity by reference to the Christian community's authorizing role. However, it has a strong subjectivist leaning and makes no reference to social construction.

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15. William V. Arnold, *Introduction to Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), 76-77.

16. Arnold, *Introduction to Pastoral Care*, 77-81.

17. E. E. Thornton, "Identity, Pastoral," in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, ed. Rodney J. Hunter (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 567.

18. Thornton, "Identity, Pastoral," 567.

19. Thornton, "Identity, Pastoral," 567.

20. John Patton, *Pastoral Care in Context: An Introduction to Pastoral Care*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 75.

In 1994, Joretta Marshall argued that pastoral identity refers to “the internal integration of the ‘pastoral’ dimension into one’s total identity, and implies an ability to articulate core theological values, perceptions, and beliefs.”<sup>21</sup> She further described its nature as “a dynamic entity which contains both stabilizing and fluid qualities.”<sup>22</sup> She conceptualizes pastoral identity as “something which reflects one’s internal and external relationships to particular theological traditions or perspectives.”<sup>23</sup> The elements of self-concept and social construct are evident in Marshall’s comments. Plus, her inclusion of “theological traditions or perspectives” and her focus on the term ‘pastoral’ anchor her model in the pastoral office.<sup>24</sup> Her work shows a balance between psychological and sociological foci, highlights the dynamic nature (stable yet fluid) of pastoral identity, and emphasizes the importance of integration.

Franz Shostrom attempted a research-based definition from clinical and academic sources.<sup>25</sup> He combined and analyzed thirty-two definitions from a survey of experts in the education and training of clergy.<sup>26</sup> His collated definition ran three pages.<sup>27</sup> Yet his summary of the definition is as follows: “It addressed issues of the faith of the person, a sense of ‘call’ to the profession of ministry, his or her relation to the Church, educational preparation, development of pastoral skills, self-awareness and an ability to use oneself as a pastoral tool. In pastoral identity these are *integrated into the personality of the minister and are a natural, comfortable part of the person’s make-up.*”<sup>28</sup> This last line about integration is especially useful. It offers both a worthy goal of pastoral identity formation and a qualitative criterion for assessment. All in all, Shostrom’s long-winded definition is comprehensive and balanced, representing a transition from the traditional to the postmodern approach.

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21. Joretta L. Marshall, “Toward the Development of a Pastoral Soul: Reflections on Identity and Theological Education,” *Pastoral Psychology*, 43, no. 1 (1994): 14.

22. Marshall, “Pastoral Soul,” 13.

23. Marshall, “Pastoral Soul,” 13.

24. Marshall, “Pastoral Soul,” 23.

25. Shostrom, “Professional Identity in Clergy,” 3.

26. Shostrom, “Professional Identity in Clergy,” 65.

27. Shostrom, “Professional Identity in Clergy,” 66-69.

28. Shostrom, “Professional Identity in Clergy,” 98. Emphasis added.

Samuel Park's recent definition resulted from his empirical research of pastoral care providers and his study of social, psychological, and theological sources.<sup>29</sup> His wordy definition features a nearly exclusive emphasis on the socially constructed aspect of pastoral identity:

Pastoral identity refers to, but is not limited to, a social construction of pastoral relationships created in the process of dynamic interactions among the care partners, culture, and the Divine in a specific care-giving context. Pastoral identity is constructed in the process of care-giving in which the care partners enhance personal agency in a community-building relationship through a perichoretic interaction of love, healing, and liberation. Such a constructed pastoral identity pays attention to calls from care seekers as well as God and, thereby, opens the way to creative transformation through mutual interactions between the care partners. This renewed definition includes three important aspects of pastoral identity: pastoral identity as identity-in-pastoral-relationships, as a twofold calling, and as pastoral trans-formation.<sup>30</sup>

Park's definition is encumbered by technical jargon and concepts that need much explanation, making it hard to grasp or apply. Furthermore, it is weak on self-concept and pastoral office. Nevertheless, Park's definition has much to commend, namely its explanation of the social construction of pastoral identity.

After reviewing the literature on pastoral identity, Bijū Chacko developed a description of pastoral identity for his thesis-project around four components: call, perception, skills, and community.<sup>31</sup> According to him, pastoral identity is "an ongoing developmental process that involves the pastor's self-perceptions, a faith community in which a pastor serves, the development and use of skills to meet the pastoral needs of those receiving care, and a calling that gives a clear direction."<sup>32</sup> Chacko's description and model are notable for their similarities and compatibility with this thesis-project's Triangular Model.

### **3. Pastoral Identity & Pastoral Function**

There is robust support in the literature for a link between pastoral identity and pastoral function. Most works reflect such an assumption and offer observations and evidence which point to a correlation. Hence the emphasis in many writings on enhancing pastoral identity as a way of improving function.

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29. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 183.

30. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 186.

31 Bijū Kunjumon Chacko, "Developing Pastoral Identity in Level One Clinical Pastoral Education Students at Duke University Hospital, Durham, North Carolina," (D.Min. thesis-project, Gardner-Webb University, Boiling Springs, NC, 2015), 11-12.

32. Chacko, "Developing Pastoral Identity," 12.

Klyne Snodgrass claims that the identity/function link applies to identity in general. He writes, “If you know who you are, you know what you must do, and if your identity is healthy, it provides a confidence that enables action. We live out of a sense of identity. It may be unexpressed or even unconscious, but it still determines us.”<sup>33</sup> All people function based on their identity. Pastors are no different.

Gary Harbaugh is emphatic when he writes, “The performance of ordained ministry is profoundly linked to ministerial identity.”<sup>34</sup> Wayne Oates agrees but is more specific:

With clarity and integrity of being, you as Christian pastors do and do not do many things.... Your functions are determined by your inner sense of identity and integrity or lack of it. The major thrust of your dialogue in prayer with God, in conversation with yourself and your family, and in interaction with your faith community of the church is, then, the clarification of your identity and the focus of the integrity of your ‘personhood’ under God. From this you draw your guidance as to the nature of your task. By means of this you resolve conflicting expectations of yourself by others.<sup>35</sup>

In a similar manner, but with a simple metaphor, Craig Dykstra describes pastoral identity as an internal gyroscope “guiding pastors in and through every crevice of pastoral life and work.”<sup>36</sup>

According to David Larsen, the connection between identity and function shows the importance of pastoral identity formation. He writes, “Function always emanates from identity.... The process of identity-formation is foundational in functioning.... Faulty formation will result in inordinate self-consciousness and brittleness as well as ineptitude in the forming of interpersonal relationships. A Biblically and theologically sound identity for the pastor-teacher is of the utmost importance.”<sup>37</sup> Similarly, William Kincaid explains how a malformed pastoral identity negatively impacts the pastor’s

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33. Klyne Snodgrass, *Who God Says You Are: A Christian Understanding of Identity* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 12.

34. Gary Harbaugh, *Pastor as Person: Maintaining Personal Integrity in the Choices and Challenges of Ministry* (Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 76.

35. Wayne Oates, *The Christian Pastor*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), 128-129.

36. Craig Dykstra, “Pastoral and Ecclesial Imagination,” in *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education and Christian Ministry*, 41-61, eds Dorothy C. Bass and Craig Dykstra (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 41, quoted in Kincaid, *Finding Voice*, xiv. Emphasis added.

37. David L. Larsen, *Caring for the Flock: Pastoral Ministry in the Local Congregation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), xi-xii.



ministry: “The difference between confidence and timidity in ministry is the quality of pastoral voice.... Without voice, pastors abdicate their pastoral responsibilities, manipulate people and situations in coercive ways, and function as technicians who fill their days with a series of seemingly unrelated and unimportant tasks.”<sup>38</sup> Healthy pastoral identity makes pastors confident, effective, and ethical.

Joretta Marshall asserts that pastoral identity gives integrity to pastoral function. She writes, “Discovering one’s pastoral identity provides the caregiver both with a sense of direction and integrity as it works to integrate the theological commitments of the soul.”<sup>39</sup> Pastoral function then becomes “the embodiment of those theological claims in concrete acts.”<sup>40</sup> According to her, pastoral identity stabilizes pastoral function through “one’s connection to a particular tradition.”<sup>41</sup> Yet, she adds, it keeps pastoral function fluid by enabling the pastor to perform various roles and functions and by giving the pastor confidence to approach those different from oneself.<sup>42</sup>

Karen Webb, in a personal reflection on her pastoral identity development, shares that over the years she learned that her pastoral identity was more important than her job description. She writes, “For me, the formation of pastoral identity is an essential pastoral care issue. The way I define myself and my sense of vocation determines the direction of my ministry and how I deal with people. It is important for me to be consistent and authentic in my caring, and that comes of knowing why I do what I do.”<sup>43</sup> Pastoral identity lends consistency and authenticity to pastoral care.

Pastoral identity does not make the difference between doing or not doing, but between doing what matters or not.<sup>44</sup> Pastoral identity prevents an aimless, draining busyness by promoting a purposeful enactment of ministry. William Hulme has noted the need to balance the qualitative and quantitative

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38. William B. Kincaid, *Finding Voice: How Theological Field Education Shapes Pastoral Identity* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012), xv.

39. Kincaid, *Finding Voice*, 12.

40. Kincaid, *Finding Voice*, 19.

41. Kincaid, *Finding Voice*, 19.

42. Kincaid, *Finding Voice*, 21-22.

43. Karen S. Webb, “Pastoral Identity and the Ministry of Presence,” *Journal of Pastoral Care* 44, no. 1 (1990): 79.

44. Gene E. Bartlett, *The Authentic Pastor* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1978), 11.

aspects of the minister's time and energy so that accomplishment and enjoyment can both become possible.<sup>45</sup> The result will be that the pastor will experience "an *integrated exhaustion* due to spending oneself rather than a disintegrated exhaustion due to fighting oneself."<sup>46</sup> Because pastoral identity can influence pastoral functioning in such a way, it may hold promise in staving off burnout.

Burnout is one of the most common forms of pastoral pathology.<sup>47</sup> In 2017, *The State of Pastors* study reported that "one third of pastors are at high or medium risk of burnout."<sup>48</sup> Interestingly, some have suggested a link between burnout and pastoral identity problems.<sup>49</sup> For example, Gaylord Noyce claims, "Clergy 'burnout,' so publicized, results more from a blurred pastoral identity than from overwork."<sup>50</sup> Thomas Oden agrees, "Doubtless a major cause of 'burnout' in ministry is the blurring of pastoral identity, or the confusion concerning what ministry is."<sup>51</sup> Could the salutary effects of pastoral identity on pastoral function hold promise in preventing or treating burnout?

In closing, the following quote by Henri Nouwen expresses well the way pastoral identity makes a difference in the pastor's functioning:

The freedom that gives him a certain independence is not authoritarian or distant. Rather, it makes him rise above the immediate needs and most urgent desires of people around him. He is deeply moved by things happening around him, but he does not allow himself to be crushed by them. He listens attentively, speaks with a self-evident authority, but does not easily get excited or nervous. In all he says or does, he proves to have *a vision that guides his life*.<sup>52</sup>

A pastor's identity functions like a "vision that guides his life." A strong pastoral identity frees the pastor to respond congruently and authentically to the needs of the situation.

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45. William E. Hulme, *Your Pastor's Problems: A Guide for Ministers and Laymen* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966), 140.

46. Hulme, *Your Pastor's Problems*, 140.

47. Bill Gaultiere, "Pastor Stress Statistics," soulshpherding.org, accessed August 27, 2021, <https://www.soulshpherding.org/pastors-under-stress/>

48. Barna Research Group, and Pepperdine University, *The State of Pastors: How Today's Faith Leaders Are Navigating Life and Leadership in an Age of Complexity* (Ventura, CA: Barna Research Group, 2017), 11.

49. G. Lloyd Rediger, "Clergy Burnout," *Church Management*, 56, no. 8 (July 1980), 10.

50. Gaylord Noyce, *Pastoral Ethics: Professional Responsibilities of the Clergy* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 11.

51. Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (New York: Harper Collins, 1983), 5.

52. Henri Nouwen, *Creative Ministry* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1978), 108-109.

#### 4. Pastoral Identity as Pastoral Office

The next three sections review literature that supports the Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity (See Figure 1).

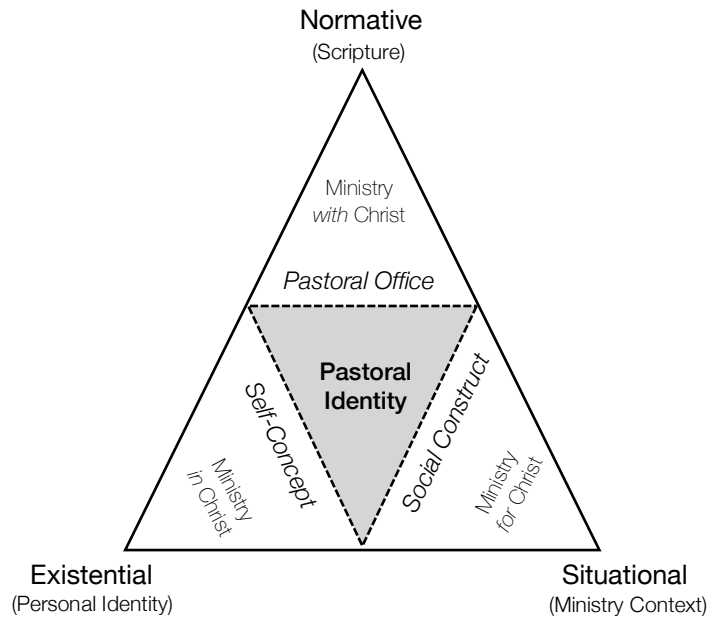


FIGURE 1: *The Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity*

The first perspective of the model is the normative one. When viewed from this standpoint, pastoral identity is seen primarily through the lens of the pastoral office. The literature suggests that the pastoral office enhances pastoral identity in three ways: 1) it distinguishes the pastor from other professionals, 2) standardizes what is common among pastors, and 3) preserves continuity with the Church's mission and pastoral tradition.

Early discussions of pastoral identity considered a "self-conscious identification as God's representative" a key aspect of pastoral identity and, therefore, an answer to much pastoral identity confusion.<sup>53</sup> The idea of representation led authors to emphasize the pastoral office as a core component of a pastor's identity. This thesis-project agrees with this early insight and retains pastoral office as a

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53. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 9.

central and normative part of pastoral identity. It should not be dismissed as an outdated “folk-understanding of pastoral identity.”<sup>54</sup>

Homer Jernigan is one who emphasized the pastoral office in discussions of pastoral identity. Concerned that pastoral counseling had gotten off track by “looking away from the ministry” to psychiatry, he urged pastoral counselors to clarify their identity by reconnecting with what is “unique and normative” about pastoral ministry. He writes,

The nature and purpose of a man's ministry must in the long run be determined by each man for himself as he comes to know who he is before God and what he has to offer to God and man as he seeks to serve the Church of Jesus Christ. But a man's struggles with his own identity must involve serious study of the historic identity of the Christian pastor and, especially, study of the purposes of God for the ministry as they can be seen through biblical, theological, and historical disciplines. Before questions about pastoral counseling can be answered, then, prior questions about a normative view of the pastoral role must be answered.<sup>55</sup>

Gordon Jackson is another who emphasized the pastoral office because of the continuity it offers with the pastoral tradition. He writes, “Borrow what he will, the pastoral counselor, by virtue of the adjective designating his identity, comes out of that history known as the cure of souls, which is the history of the pastoral office.... However the office of the pastor has changed through the centuries, there is an identifiable strand of continuity. The pastor has a representative character about him.”<sup>56</sup>

John Young stressed the pastoral office as a source for defining and strengthening pastoral identity.<sup>57</sup> He exhorts pastors, “I want to suggest that there is an appropriate pastoral identity and authority that a minister has by virtue of office or role or task, and if we reject it then we do so at the cost of confusing those amongst whom we carry out our ministry.”<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, he explains that eschewing pastoral authority is really a misguided individualism that hinders pastoral effectiveness in two ways.<sup>59</sup>

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54. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 9.

55. Jernigan, “Identity of the Pastor,” 195.

56. Gordon E. Jackson, “The Pastoral Counselor: His Identity and Work,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 3, no. 3 (1964): 252.

57. John H. Young, “Seeking Pastoral Identity for Those in Ordained Ministry,” *Touchstone* 15, no. 2 (May 1997): 4–15.

58. Young, “Seeking Pastoral Identity,” 11.

59. Young, “Seeking Pastoral Identity,” 11.

First, it ignores the “the effect of one’s actions in a heavily symbolic enterprise” and ironically puts the pastor’s needs first.<sup>60</sup> Second, it sends the message that “the power or effect of our ministry rests entirely in our hands.”<sup>61</sup> The pastoral office communicates to the pastor and the people that the pastor acts by God’s authority and for God’s purposes.<sup>62</sup>

Thomas Oden’s conception of pastoral identity relies almost exclusively on pastoral office. As already mentioned, his 1979 address to the AAPC called for a recovery of “traditional pastoral identity” as articulated in the classic pastoral works.<sup>63</sup> Oden’s later work, *Pastoral Theology*, takes the same stance, insisting that pastoral identity is primarily an embodiment of the pastoral office. He writes, “pastoral counsel expresses and embodies a clear pastoral identity based on ordination which stands deliberately and self-consciously under Christ’s commission, melding integrally with the work of pastor as teacher, liturgist, and helper of the sick and poor.”<sup>64</sup> In dealing with pastoral identity crises, Oden claims, “the neglected remedy is solid rerooting in classical pastoral wisdom, which has carefully held together Christ’s ministry and ours, God’s gift and the church’s task, grace and responsiveness.”<sup>65</sup> One wonders if Oden’s solution to what he calls “modern chauvinism” is an over-correction. Oden’s approach feels pre-modern and lacks the particularity that comes from taking one’s context seriously. He denies “archaism;” but a pre-modern bias taints his comments. Continuity with pastoral tradition is essential; yet so is an identity that embodies and contextualizes the pastoral office in one’s particular situation.

Clare McGrath-Merkle took Oden’s call to return to the tradition seriously and examined Gregory the Great’s use of the metaphor of the ‘physician of the heart’ in *The Book of Pastoral Rule*.<sup>66</sup> Her aim

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60. Young, “Seeking Pastoral Identity,” 15.

61. Young, “Seeking Pastoral Identity,” 15.

62. Young, “Seeking Pastoral Identity,” 15.

63. Thomas C. Oden, “Recovering Lost Identity,” *Journal of Pastoral Care* 34, no. 1 (1980): 14.

64. Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 4.

65. Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 5.

66. Clare McGrath-Merkle, “Gregory the Great’s Metaphor of the Physician of the Heart as a Model for Pastoral Identity,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 50, no. 2 (2011): 374–88.

was to treat a pastoral identity crisis in the Roman Catholic priesthood.<sup>67</sup> But her insights have wide applicability. She shows how the pastoral office guided Gregory's theology of pastoral identity. He relied on wise predecessors, utilized a vivid metaphor (physician), articulated key traits of a good pastor, described pastoral duties, pointed out temptations and challenges, prescribed a course of preparation, and held up a biblical model in Aaron the priest, and paid careful attention to the cultural context of his day.<sup>68</sup> She convincingly shows that Gregory saw pastoral identity primarily through the lens of pastoral office.

William Kincaid's understanding of pastoral identity focuses on self-concept and social construct. Yet he insists that "embracing the vocation of pastor" is a key step in pastoral identity formation.<sup>69</sup> The pastoral office "situates pastoral work in the life and purposes of the Christian tradition. The idea of office seeks to curb understandings that distort the relationship between the church and the pastor, such as minister as spiritual celebrity, religious entrepreneur, or autocratic authority."<sup>70</sup> Finally, he adds that rooting pastoral identity in pastoral office helps the pastor to minister with "confident presence" and "thoughtful practice."<sup>71</sup>

Reading Samuel Park's *Pastoral Identity as Social Construction*, one might get the impression that pastoral identity is entirely a social construction. Yet even his post-modern approach acknowledges the need to be grounded in the pastoral office. He cautions, "If pastoral identity is only born in pastoral relationships with the helped, then the identity is likely to be shaky as well as fluid, and inclusive but not grounded. A clear relationship with God and connection to the theological community and tradition is an important aspect of what it means to be pastoral."<sup>72</sup> Pastoral office grounds pastoral identity.

Matt Bloom's research reveals that pastoral office is adaptable enough to offer a way of being in ministry that is authentic to oneself and authentic to the pastorate:

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67. McGrath-Merkle, "Gregory the Great," 375.

68. McGrath-Merkle, "Gregory the Great," 381-386.

69. Kincaid, *Finding Voice*, xviii, 66.

70. Kincaid, *Finding Voice*, 72.

71. Kincaid, *Finding Voice*, 73.

72. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 184.

Pastors who flourish are able to craft ways of enacting these common ministry responsibilities that are authentic to their own, unique gifts and graces *and* that create effective pastoral leadership. No flourishing pastor attempted to redefine the role of pastor in his or her image. They aspired to be a pastor in ways that were consonant with dispositions, habits, knowledge, and ways of being that are essential for any pastoral vocation. So pastors also need to craft an identity that is authentic to the pastorate.

Whereas self-concept is a variable that makes each pastor unique, pastoral office makes all pastors similar and “harmonizes personal authenticity and professional legitimacy.”<sup>73</sup>

In an important article on pastoral identity, John Johnson anchors pastoral identity in pastoral office by means of the Old Testament offices of prophet, priest, and king.<sup>74</sup> He also adds a fourth office of Sage. He claims that “From these offices the fundamental marks of a minister emerge, guiding him in both his self-concept as well as his day-to-day responsibilities before God.”<sup>75</sup> According to Johnson, the ministry of Jesus was the perfect embodiment of these combined offices. So, he explains how the offices operated in the Old Testament, how they were fulfilled in Christ’s ministry, and how they apply to pastors today. He concludes, “The Old Testament offices provide a balanced definition of pastoral identity, harmonized perfectly in Christ. Hence any confusion as to one’s pastoral identity can be sorted out by examining the ministry of the four offices.”<sup>76</sup>

As a new pastor fresh from seminary, David Fisher quickly learned the duties of ministry but soon began to wrestle with the nagging question of identity.<sup>77</sup> His peers and colleagues seemed just as uncertain. The problem, he concluded, was a lack of a biblical norm for pastoral identity. He writes, “I was troubled also because the role and expectations in the church and in the community seemed to have no biblical or theological basis. Pastors were expected to do certain things simply because that’s what pastors did. Not many people were interested in discussing the biblical role of a pastor, and fewer were

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73. Matt Bloom, *Flourishing in Ministry: How to Cultivate Clergy Wellbeing* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 67.

74. John E. Johnson, “The Old Testament Offices as a Paradigm for Pastoral Identity,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152 (April-June 1995): 184.

75. Johnson, “Old Testament Offices,” 184.

76. Johnson, “Old Testament Offices,” 191.

77. David C. Fisher, *21st Century Pastor: A Vision Based on the Ministry of Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), chap. 1, Kindle.

willing to deal with the underlying and more fundamental question: What is a Christian pastor?”<sup>78</sup>

Fisher’s quest led him study to the ministry of Paul. He concludes, “While the theological *foundation* for pastoral ministry is the person and work of Christ, the biblical *framework* for pastoral ministry is found in the ministry of the apostles, especially Paul.”<sup>79</sup> Fisher finds seven sets of images and metaphors for the pastoral office in Paul’s letters: Christ’s prisoners, jars of clay, God’s penmen, mother and father, farmers and builders, servants and stewards, and ambassador and preacher. Fisher’s model of pastoral identity is a good example of pastoral identity that is governed by biblical norms and yet balanced by other factors. He does not disregard the self-concept or situational aspect of pastoral identity. For example, he concedes, “While the changing culture does form a most significant part of our formation and function as pastors, our primary cues must not come from the culture.”<sup>80</sup> Finally, Fisher’s approach shows that biblical images and metaphors help to keep pastoral identity rooted in the biblical standard of the pastoral office.

## 5. Pastoral Identity as Self-Concept

The second perspective of the Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity is the existential one, which views pastoral identity as a self-concept. In reviewing the literature, this thesis-project concludes that the self-concept is a personal construct which is influenced by social and theological factors. There are two phases to its formation. First, it is initially constructed through *pastoral formation* during the process of becoming a pastor. The developing pastor forms a provisional self-concept by internalizing pastoral images and metaphors, growing in self-knowledge, making theological commitments, and emulating pastoral role models. Second, the self-concept is then continuously re-formed throughout the pastor’s ministry through *theological reflection* on pastoral praxis and social interaction. As the pastor grows in self-knowledge and experience, he or she revises the self-concept through differentiation from other pastors and through commitment to new, unique ways of being a pastor.

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78. Fisher, *21st Century Pastor*, chap. 1.

79. Fisher, *21st Century Pastor*, Introduction.

80. Fisher, *21st Century Pastor*, chap.1.



Forming a self-concept begins with knowing one's unique, personal identity, which becomes the foundation for pastoral identity. Homer Jernigan writes,

The pastor is first of all a unique person with a unique combination of abilities, energies, training, and experience. He has his own unique identity and his ministry is not *his* ministry until he has accepted his identity as fully as he can and found ways in which he can express this identity in every area of pastoral work. In addition to his own experience as a person he has, hopefully, his own unique experience as a Christian to bring to his pastoral task.<sup>81</sup>

Once a pastor knows and accepts his or her personal identity, then a pastoral self-concept can be formed as a congruent extension of the self.

According to Erik Erikson, when personal (or ego) identity is achieved, an “accrued confidence” emerges with “an inner sameness and continuity which others can recognize.”<sup>82</sup> John Patton applied this idea to pastoral identity, observing, “Pastoral identity involves the confidence that in the midst of changing circumstances I *am* a pastor and that in many ways I can take this for granted. To myself I *feel* like a pastor and, therefore, do not have to be concerned about this when I attempt to offer ministry to another person.”<sup>83</sup> A hallmark, therefore, of the self-concept is a subjective experience of oneself as a pastor.<sup>84</sup> He also adds that the pastor's self-concept is shaped by ordination, accepting the visible pastoral role, engaging in pastoral functions, and reflecting on all three in dialogue with the Church.<sup>85</sup>

Based on his study of the pastoral identity of Dutch Catholic and Protestant ministers, Reinard Nauta defined self-concept this way:

The self-conception is a conception by the self about the self: something I say about me. One of the functions of the self-concept is a cognitive one, to organize the data of experience. As such it can be seen as a set of self-schemes, general beliefs about the self, that organize past experiences and are used to recognize and interpret relevant stimuli in the social environment.<sup>86</sup>

In other words, self-concept is “the momentary or more enduring way people understand themselves”

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81. Jernigan, “Identity of the Pastor,” 196.

82. Robert Coles, *Erik H. Erikson: The Growth of His Work* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1970), 165-166 quoted in Patton, *Pastoral Counseling*, 49.

83. John Patton, *Pastoral Counseling: A Ministry of the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1983), 49.

84. Patton, *Pastoral Counseling*, 50.

85. Patton, *Pastoral Counseling*, 40.

86. Reinard Nauta, “Pastoral Identity and Communication,” *Journal of Empirical Theology* 6, no. 2 (1993): 5-6.

which shapes how one interprets and responds to events and people.<sup>87</sup> It is a meaningful personal story: “As a personal construct it refers to identity evaluations concerning one’s past and future, to judgments of self-worth, and to beliefs of hope and aspiration.”<sup>88</sup> Finally, it relies heavily upon images (e.g., shepherd, counselor, friend, or teacher) which the pastor internalizes and then projects to others.<sup>89</sup>

Nauta learned that a pastor’s self-concept is rarely formed in abstraction or isolation. He writes, “Practicing their role, working as a pastor, they learn to express their particular style and habitus of pastoral work.”<sup>90</sup> The pastoral self-concept, then, is a dynamic thing which is constantly honed through the experience and practice of ministry. Nauta also observes that the self-concept is more than a personal construct; it is also “a social construct reflecting the opinions and attitudes communicated by significant others.”<sup>91</sup> Moreover, “The self-concept can be based to a large extent on role experiences, experiences learned when executing behavior related to a particular position in a social system.”<sup>92</sup> Finally, the self-concept is the aspect of pastoral identity most powerfully experienced by the pastor: “In a very personal sense, many pastors experience their ministry as intensely self-expressive and fulfilling.... The pastoral self-concept becomes the core element in the pastor’s personal identity.”<sup>93</sup> The pastor’s self-concept is a dynamic, personalized, and highly expressive part of pastoral identity which is honed continuously through reflection on pastoral practice and social feedback.

It is imperative that one’s self-concept be clear, realistic, and sober. If exaggerated, it can set the pastor on a collision course with unreasonable expectations. William Hulme observes, “The problem goes back again to the minister’s image of himself—and the pressure to live up to that image.”<sup>94</sup> A faulty self-

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87. Nauta, “Pastoral Identity and Communication,” 5.

88. Nauta, “Pastoral Identity and Communication,” 5.

89. Nauta, “Pastoral Identity and Communication,” 5-7, 24.

90. Nauta, “Pastoral Identity and Communication,” 5.

91. Nauta, “Pastoral Identity and Communication,” 5-6.

92. Nauta, “Pastoral Identity and Communication,” 6.

93. Nauta, “Pastoral Identity and Communication,” 6.

94. Hulme, *Your Pastor's Problems*, 93.

concept can also get in the way of pastors receiving the help and support they need. Barbara Gilbert's study of clergy stress found that one of the "underlying stumbling blocks to getting support," has to do with the metaphors pastors use to describe themselves.<sup>95</sup> Her hypothesis is that "the way one views the ministerial role is a key issue in whether clergy and their spouses are able to get the support they need."<sup>96</sup> For example, metaphors like 'caregiver,' 'helper,' and 'shepherd' "implied giving rather than receiving. Often there is a hidden assumption made ... that caregiving is a one-way street."<sup>97</sup> If a pastor's self-concept does not include the need for help or support, it can stand in the way of coping with the challenges of ministry. In fact, one form of pastoral pathology is caused by a self-concept which has no room for the pastor's humanity.

Superhuman complexes go by various names, the most common of which is the 'Messiah complex.' Michael Wilson and Brad Hoffman describe what they call "the God complex."<sup>98</sup> Edward Bratcher devoted an entire book to the what he calls the "walk-on-water syndrome," which he explains as "the heresy that ministers are more than human."<sup>99</sup> In these superhuman complexes, the pastor is seen—by himself, others, or both—as a special kind of person who is expected to be either perfectly human, exceptionally human, or more than human. Clinical psychologist Archibald Hart explains the thinking behind such a dangerous complex:

Too often it is thought that, since the ministry is carried out as a service to God, the minister himself must be especially godlike. This tendency to deny the minister the right to be human can be very dangerous, especially when the minister himself begins to think that way.... Ministers often feel the need to be almost superhuman, possessing unusual gifts of intellect, social grace, and moral strength. They must be the perfect example of all the attributes of the Christian gospel. This is

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95. Barbara Gilbert, *Who Ministers to the Minister?: A Study of Support Systems for Clergy and Spouses* (Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 1987), 24, 34-44.

96. Gilbert, *Who Ministers*, 35.

97. Gilbert, *Who Ministers*, 35.

98. Michael Todd Wilson and Brad Hoffman, *Preventing Ministry Failure: A Shepherd Care Guide for Pastors, Ministers, and Other Caregivers* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 18.

99. Edward B. Bratcher, *The Walk-On-Water Syndrome: Dealing with Professional Hazards in Ministry* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1984), 25.

clearly an impossible situation, but many find themselves caught up in an endless cycle of attempting—and failing—to live up to these demands.<sup>100</sup>

Not surprisingly, this distortion sets up unreasonable expectations and results in dysfunctional attempts at managing them.

Paul David Tripp recounts how superhuman thinking took root in him: “But ministry had redefined me. In ways I now find embarrassing, it told me that I was not like everyone else, that I existed in a unique category. And if I was not like everyone else, then I didn’t need what everyone else needs.”<sup>101</sup> Zack Eswine fell into a similar mindset as a young pastor. He writes, “It was becoming clear to me that if I was to prove successful in ministry, I needed to do something great, and I needed to define something great in terms of how large, famous, and fast I could accomplish it.”<sup>102</sup> As a prevention for such grandiosity, he stresses the need to recover one’s humanity and warns against the four temptations pastors face: to be everywhere for all (omnipresence), to fix it all (omnipotence), to know it all (omniscience), and to crave immediacy rather than ministering with patience.<sup>103</sup>

Superhuman thinking can create resistance to seeking help for fear of what others might think.<sup>104</sup> Dr. Louis McBurney describes this resistance among pastors as a “crisis of dependency.”<sup>105</sup> He writes, “Besides the discomfort of needing help, ministers also want to avoid the vulnerability involved in realizing one’s own weakness.”<sup>106</sup> In forming their self-concept, pastors need inspiring images that capture the significance of their ministry; but it is crucial that their self-concept affirm their humanity with all its needs, limitations, and weaknesses.

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100. Archibald D. Hart, *Coping with Depression in the Ministry and Other Helping Professions* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1984), 13-14, 20.

101. Paul David Tripp, *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 23.

102. Zack Eswine, *The Imperfect Pastor: Discovering Joy in Our Limitations through a Daily Apprenticeship with Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 21.

103. Eswine, *The Imperfect Pastor*, chaps. 2, 5-8.

104. Bratcher, *Walk-On Water Syndrome*, 114.

105. Louis McBurney, M.D., *Counseling Christian Workers: A How-To Approach* (Waco, TX: Word Publishing, 1986), 50-52.

106. McBurney, *Counseling Christian Workers*, 51.

## 6. Pastoral Identity as Social Construct

The third, situational perspective of the Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity views pastoral identity as a social construct. In addition to the internal dimension of self-concept, pastoral identity includes an objective component that exists “outside” the pastor in the social structures and relationships in which the pastor is embedded. Samuel Park explains, “Identities do not appear in a vacuum but in relationships with others. However, identities do not occur automatically in relationships but in reflexive interactions in which the agentive self reflects her or himself in relation to others.”<sup>107</sup> This social construction is a dual process. First, it is constructed through the process of *symbolic interaction* that occurs during pastoral praxis.<sup>108</sup> This interaction creates a feedback loop in which projection, perception, and reflection occur. Tucker and Koessler describe how this works: “Perception is intrinsic to identity. We are who we see ourselves to be. In many respects, our sense of identity is a mirrored reflection. We know who we are as a result of what others tell us about ourselves. But identity is also projected. The identity that is reflected back to us is often an image we project to others.”<sup>109</sup> Second, pastoral identity is constructed through a process of *cultural contextualization* as the pastor embodies pastoral office in a ministry context. In summary, pastoral identity grows out of engagement with the pastor’s faith community and the larger society he or she inhabits.

As mentioned in the theological framework of chapter II, Christian theology affirms the social nature of humanity. This means that participation in society gives particularity and concreteness to each person’s identity and influences their self-understanding.<sup>110</sup> The behavioral sciences have observed

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107. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 184.

108. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 23. Park utilizes the work of Herbert Blumer who develop Symbolic Interactionism (SI), a social psychology theory that draws on the work of George Herbert Mead, to develop his model of social construction at the micro-level of pastoral interactions. He cites Blumer to explain that SI rests on three premises: “1) people ‘act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them’; 2) these meanings are ‘derived from, or arise out of the social interactions that one has with one’s fellows’; and 3) ‘these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things [one] encounters.’” (Park, p. 23).

109. Brian J. Tucker and John Koessler, *All Together Different: Upholding the Church's Unity While Honoring Our Individual Identities* (Moody Publishers, 2018), chap. 2, ProQuest Ebook Central.

110. Kevin Vanhoozer, “Human Being, Individual and Social,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 174-75.

something similar. For instance, Erikson's work reflected a balance between the individual and social components of personal identity.<sup>111</sup> Likewise, most identity studies since Erikson have found an inseparable link between self and society, individual and culture, and agency and structure.<sup>112</sup> Whereas some traditional approaches to identity are blind to the social aspects of identity and some postmodern approaches go so far as to dismiss any personal aspects, this thesis-project holds both together. As with personal identity, pastoral identity is a combination of personal and social constructs, which interact underneath a theological construct.

Most considerations of pastoral identity start with the question, "Who am I?" But according to Edward Thornton, it is just as important to ask, "To Whom Do I Belong?" This question implies that pastoral identity is shaped by one's ecclesiastical connections and theological commitments.<sup>113</sup> As a social construct, it is a product of belonging to the faith and the faithful.

John Patton has said that the pastoral role is "an external perception of what one is and how one functions in relation to a particular society or community."<sup>114</sup> Therefore, it lends to pastoral identity two important elements: visibility and function.<sup>115</sup> Through reflection on the meaning of the role and participation in an "action and response dialogue between the minister and the church," the pastor's identity is formed and enhanced.<sup>116</sup> Patton's view is traditional in that it prioritizes the theologically formed self-concept. However, he acknowledges the influence of social interaction on the pastor's self-concept through the social perception of the visible, pastoral role.

Several authors have written of the effect of the symbolic role of the pastor on pastoral identity. David Switzer has noted that "we ministers are not only who we understand we are as persons and as pastors, but we are the ones whom others see and respond to in particular ways when they become aware

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111. Shostrom, "Professional Identity in Clergy," 15.

112. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 12.

113. Thornton, "Identity, Pastoral," 568.

114. Patton, *Pastoral Counseling*, 40.

115. Patton, *Pastoral Counseling*, 40.

116. Patton, *Pastoral Counseling*, 50, 40.

that we are ordained clergy.”<sup>117</sup> This response may be conscious or unconscious, but it is caused by the pastor’s symbolic impact.<sup>118</sup> People carry images of what a pastor represents and, he adds, “The very physical presence of the minister has the power to stimulate those internal images.”<sup>119</sup> Wayne Oates is another who has written of the “symbolic power of the pastor.”<sup>120</sup> He writes to pastors, “You represent and symbolize more than yourself. You represent God the Father; you serve as a reminder of Jesus Christ; you follow the leading of the Holy Spirit; you are an emissary of a specific church; and you activate the caricatures of the Christian faith to those who are hostile, suspicious, and/or detached from the Christian faith.”<sup>121</sup> Pastoral identity is socially constructed when the pastor encounters this symbolic perception of the pastor which resides deep in the collective consciousness of society.<sup>122</sup>

William Hulme has noted that the congregation and its pastor tend to fashion one another through the images that they form of each another. He observes that “the consistency of the congregation as audience fashions its own image in the preacher’s mind. He prepares his sermons and preaches under the influence of this image.... It would be difficult to determine whether the pastor or the congregation has the more influence over the other. The best that we can say is that each is to some extent the creator of the other.”<sup>123</sup> Just as the pastor has a formative influence on congregants, so the congregation has a formative influence on the pastor.

Karen Webb shares a personal reflection of how she entered ministry with a clear understanding of what to do but with little sense of who she was. She slowly gained a clearer pastoral identity partly by responding to the feedback of her parishioners. She writes, “As it happened, my pastoral identity has been shaped, up until now, primarily by my sense of vocation and the needs of the people I serve. Because I

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117. Switzer, “The Minister,” 56.

118. Switzer, “The Minister,” 56.

119. Switzer, “The Minister,” 57.

120. Oates, *The Christian Pastor*, 65.

121. Oates, *The Christian Pastor*, 65.

122. Oates, *The Christian Pastor*, 65.

123. Hulme, *Your Pastor's Problems*, 57, 59.

had little else to go on, I relied on my people to let me know what was helpful ministry, and happily for us all, what they needed most was what I had most to give: they needed someone to love them.”<sup>124</sup> This feedback from parishioners inevitably influences the formation of pastoral identity. Joretta Marshall agrees, “One’s identity is shaped, formed, and re-formed in the context of working with individuals, families, churches, and denominations, reflecting theologically on the struggles and celebrations of persons in the midst of those settings. It is in this context that one appropriates and embodies the gift of being a pastoral representative.”<sup>125</sup> She asserts that “the importance of the community of faith in developing a pastoral identity cannot be underestimated.”<sup>126</sup>

William Kincaid is another author who acknowledges the social construction of pastoral identity: “[O]thers have a say in how we understand ourselves. We may get the final word about the shape and character of our lives if we work hard enough at it, but we arrive at our identity in relationship to other people, places, and events.”<sup>127</sup> He focuses on the process of contextualization in which the pastor engages with one’s micro and macro context. He writes, “pastoral voice arises when you engage with the particularities of your immediate context and with the shifts and trends that are afoot in the broader culture.”<sup>128</sup> For Kincaid, knowing and inhabiting place is key to both pastoral identity formation and effective ministry.<sup>129</sup> As he puts it, “Knowing the truth of a place is a key step in a minister’s journey toward discovering a vital and focused pastoral identity. Moreover, you must ask yourself what the truth of a place calls forth in you.”<sup>130</sup> This requires the pastor to learn a place through “sustained attention” while conducting four types of research: *observing, listening, gathering* information, and *interpreting*.<sup>131</sup>

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124. Webb, “Pastoral Identity,” 79.

125. Marshall, “Pastoral Soul,” 19.

126. Marshall, “Pastoral Soul,” 22.

127. Kincaid, *Finding Voice*, 2.

128. Kincaid, *Finding Voice*, 13.

129. Kincaid, *Finding Voice*, 13.

130. Kincaid, *Finding Voice*, 28.

131. Kincaid, *Finding Voice*, 24.



This contextual analysis shapes the pastor if he surrenders to the process of becoming part of the place himself.<sup>132</sup> This reflects the old adage, “You can’t change a place until the place changes you.”

Contextualization only happens by remaining “thoughtfully and honestly present with a group of people over time.”<sup>133</sup> Therefore, borrowing the words of Jesus (cf. Matt 10:11), Kincaid urges pastors to “stay until you leave.”<sup>134</sup> The goal, however, is to move beyond simply knowing a place to loving a place.<sup>135</sup>

Reinard Nauta has found empirical evidence to support the fact that ‘pastoral communication’ (i.e. interaction) shapes pastoral identity (Figure 3).<sup>136</sup> This communication happens in a “a specific position within a multidimensional pastoral space,” which he explains is “a compromise of personal preferences and social expectations with respect to the rather complex pattern of clerical activities to be performed and pastoral relations to be developed and maintained by a particular pastor.”<sup>137</sup> The way this

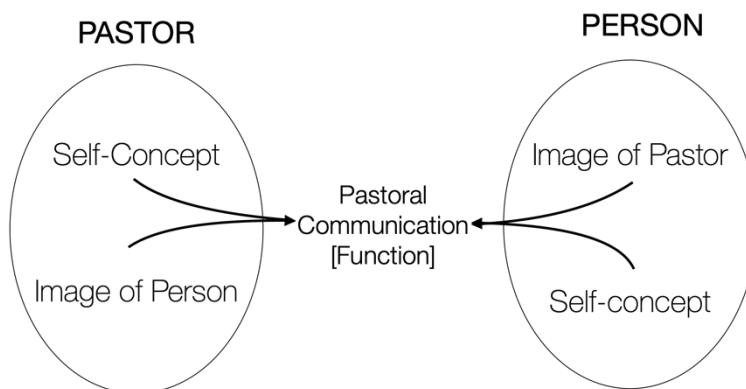


FIGURE 3: Reinard Nauta’s Pastoral Communication Model

works is that a pastor brings both a self-concept and a perception of the care partner, both of which are tied to images.<sup>138</sup> Likewise, the care partner also brings a self-concept and a perception of the pastor based

132. Kincaid, *Finding Voice*, 27.

133. Kincaid, *Finding Voice*, 35.

134. Kincaid, *Finding Voice*, 34.

135. Kincaid, *Finding Voice*, 28, 37.

136. Nauta, “Pastoral Identity and Communication,” 24.

137. Reinard Nauta, “Psychological Dynamics of Pastoral Identity,” *Journal of Empirical Theology* 9, no. 1 (1996) 1:

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138. Nauta, “Pastoral Identity and Communication,” 7, 24.

on images.<sup>139</sup> These then interact to negotiate a compromise of pastoral identity. For example, the pastor might conceive of himself as a “counselor” and perceive the partner as a “straggler.”<sup>140</sup> At the same time, the partner brings a self-concept of “seeker” but perceives the pastor as a “Teacher.”<sup>141</sup> The interaction of those images determines the type of pastoral communication that occurs.<sup>142</sup> While Nauta keeps the self-concept primary, his research elucidates how the interaction of images and perceptions between the pastor and parishioner contributes to a social construction of pastoral identity.

Samuel Park has published the most thorough study of the social construction of pastoral identity. His view incorporates postmodern approaches to conceptualize pastoral identity almost exclusively in terms of social construction. Along with his empirical research of pastoral caregivers, Park uses social psychology, social constructionist perspectives, and trinitarian theology to develop a model of pastoral identity that is “a social and relational construction mutually created by pastoral caregivers and seekers through a dynamic interaction of lived experience and care-giving activities within specific social contexts.”<sup>143</sup> He concludes three things about the social construction of pastoral identity. First, “pastoral identity is constructed in care-giving relationships.”<sup>144</sup> Second, postmodern contexts influence pastoral identity, but pastors exert their agency to creatively negotiate structures and institutions.<sup>145</sup> Third, pastoral care partners co-construct pastoral identity through a “dynamic interplay” between “agency and structure,” “groundedness and inclusiveness,” and “human partners and the Divine.”<sup>146</sup> The interplay of groundedness and inclusiveness refers to pastors “grounding themselves theologically while at the same time being authentically open to the other and creatively interacting with culture.”<sup>147</sup>

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139. Nauta, “Pastoral Identity and Communication,” 24.

140. Nauta, “Pastoral Identity and Communication,” 24.

141. Nauta, “Pastoral Identity and Communication,” 24.

142. Nauta, “Pastoral Identity and Communication,” 6-8.

143. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 11.

144. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 95.

145. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 95.

146. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 95.

147. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 176.

Park interprets his empirical data to create a rather elaborate yet insightful diagram of the pastoral identity construction process.<sup>148</sup> The *first* phase of the process starts with the pastor approaching the care partners with a presumed identity as an authoritative, ‘spiritual figure’ through introduction and education.<sup>149</sup> Then the care partner has the option to accept or reject the pastor. If invited into the world of the care partner, the *second* phase requires the pastor to establish presence through a five step process of humbling, which involves becoming present as a fellow human, listening to their stories to create a safe space, learning with empathy, walking with them as a companion, and examining their own projections and learning from failures.<sup>150</sup> In the *third* phase, at the care partner’s invitation, the ‘spiritual figure,’ now humbled as a ‘fellow human,’ becomes truly ‘a pastor’ who is theologically and spiritually sensitive and compassionately responds.<sup>151</sup> The *final* phase occurs when the pastor and care partner together become ‘divine partakers’ who realize the divine presence and partake of God’s ministry to and through them. At that moment, pastoral identity is constructed in the pastoral interaction and confirmed in God’s presence.<sup>152</sup> According to Park, pastoral identity is co-constructed in real time with a care partner as the pastor moves from being a spiritual figure, to fellow human, to pastor, to divine partaker.<sup>153</sup>

All in all, Park summarizes the difference that an understanding of the social construction makes for pastoral identity with three statements. First, it means that pastoral identity is “an identity-in-pastoral-relationship.”<sup>154</sup> In other words, “pastoral identity is embedded in reflexivity of one’s self in relation to those needing help.”<sup>155</sup> Second, pastoral identity is “a dynamic call” not only from God but also from care seekers.<sup>156</sup> Finally, pastoral identity is “pastoral transformation,” meaning that pastoral identity is a

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148. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 96.

149. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 56-63.

150. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 63-74.

151. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 75-85.

152. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 86-95.

153. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 95.

154. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 184.

155. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 184

156. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 185.

continuous “interactive process” of change.<sup>157</sup>

In closing, the topic of social construction is related to the issues of pastoral stress and the management of expectations. Donald Smith opens his landmark work on stress in the ministry with these words: “From the moment a young pastor steps into the pulpit or presides at a board meeting he is caught in the cross fire of conflicting expectations for the ministry.”<sup>158</sup> According to Smith, the pastor’s stress is primarily due to the conflicting expectations that arise from role conflict and role ambiguity. In role ambiguity, neither the pastor nor the people have clear expectations for the pastoral role. In role conflict, the pastor and the people have clear but conflicting expectations of the role.<sup>159</sup> Likewise, Barbara Gilbert discovered that expectations and projections were a major source of stress in parish ministry. She explains that expectations can be both *internal* and *external*—the pastor brings expectations and encounters the expectations of others.<sup>160</sup> She adds, “The stress level goes up to the degree that pastors feel they must meet these expectations.”<sup>161</sup> Furthermore, she notes the important role *metaphors* have in placing pressure on pastors. Even if pastors internalize healthy, biblical metaphors, they will still encounter “other people’s images and their resistance to change them.”<sup>162</sup>

What is a pastor to do? Eugene Peterson’s advice is mature and productive: “In a determined and kindly tension with those who thoughtlessly presume to write our job descriptions for us, we can, I am convinced, recover our proper work.”<sup>163</sup> The clash of metaphors and expectations can lead to stress for pastors. But if they form and maintain their identity in a “determined and kindly tension” with their people, they can accomplish their “proper work” and manage the challenges of ministry.

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157. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 186.

158. Donald P. Smith, *Clergy in the Crossfire: Coping with Role Conflicts in the Ministry* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1973), 13.

159. Smith, *Clergy in the Crossfire*, chap. 1.

160. Gilbert, *Who Ministers*, 5.

161. Gilbert, *Who Ministers*, 5.

162. Gilbert, *Who Ministers*, 37.

163. Eugene H. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction*, vol. 4 of Eugene Peterson’s Pastoral Library: Four Books in One Volume (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 60.

## 7. Pastoral Identity (Re)Formation

Among the many opinions on pastoral identity formation in the literature, three themes are prominent. First, personal identity formation serves as *an analogy* for understanding the formation of pastoral identity.<sup>164</sup> This theme is reflected in everything presented in this section and so will not receive separate treatment. Second, pastoral identity formation is an *ongoing, lifelong process*. Third, *theological reflection* on pastoral practice is a major component of the pastoral identity formation process. Opinions diverge over whether this formative reflection occurs *ex situ* (i.e., personally constructed after the fact in private or in group) or *in situ* (i.e., socially constructed in the actual pastoral interaction). This thesis-project holds that the (re)formation process requires both types of reflection.

### *A Lifelong Process*

Pastoral identity formation is a key component in the preparation and training of pastors. Yet most authors recognize that pastoral identity formation does not stop when pastors graduate from seminary. Joretta Marshall writes,

Seminaries and divinity schools provide one of the most formidable environments for developing initial reflections on identity. However, pastoral identity as the process of developing an internal sense of pastoral authority, claiming those convictions which are shaped in the ongoing context of theological reflection about pastoral situations, requires concrete engagement in life beyond seminary.<sup>165</sup>

Pastoral identity formation begins in education but continues throughout a pastor's ministry.<sup>166</sup>

Authors frequently note that the early years of ministry are pivotal for pastoral identity. Archibald Hart observes that "the seeds for problems in later ministerial life are usually planted during the first five years of service. It is during these years that habits and styles of operating are formed."<sup>167</sup> Part of the

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164. Shostrom, "Professional Identity in Clergy," 8.

165. Marshall, "Pastoral Soul," 18.

166. Shostrom, "Professional Identity in Clergy," 5.

167. Hart, *Depression in the Ministry*, 14.

problem is that new pastors tend to view the ministry idealistically.<sup>168</sup> When developing pastors experience failure, they either learn to cope effectively or ineffectively. Hart continues, “As the years pass, these habitual and automatic patterns of coping, either constructive or destructive, become deeply entrenched.”<sup>169</sup> The maladaptive coping patterns that often develop early in ministry make pastoral identity reformation necessary at various stages of ministry.

Thomas Oden sees the need for identity reformation at midcareer: “The best way to battle through the pastoral identity crisis is to think thoroughly about the pastoral office in one’s earlier periods of study for ministry. But there are always opportunities, often through continuing education, to reformulate pastoral identity after a significant midcareer period of questioning.”<sup>170</sup> John Patton agrees that the minister’s quest for pastoral identity is “relevant for a minister at mid-career as well as for students in CPE.”<sup>171</sup>

Tanya Wittwer goes even further, describing pastoral identity formation as “a lifelong process as leaders continually develop and renew their gifts through reading, continuing education, and pastoral reflection on their interactions with parishioners, colleagues, and the world.”<sup>172</sup> Likewise, Gene Bartlett reflects, “After all these years in ministry, I’m persuaded that the need to understand who we are and what we do and why we do it is a lifelong unfinished business. To abandon the inquiry, to close off one’s life, and to settle for repetitious imitations in ministry is to miss one of life’s most exciting—and demanding—experiences.”<sup>173</sup> The need for pastoral identity (re)formation is foundational in seminary and key at certain pivotal seasons of ministry, but it continues to be relevant at all stages of a pastor’s ministry.

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168. Hart, *Depression in the Ministry*, 14.

169. Hart, *Depression in the Ministry*, 14.

170. Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 5.

171. Patton, *Pastoral Counseling*, 56.

172. Tanya Wittwer, “Pastoral Formation: Storying Professional Identity,” *Lutheran Theological Journal*, 40, no. 1 (May 2006): 20.

173. Bartlett, *The Authentic Pastor*, 11-12.

### *Theological Reflection on Pastoral Praxis*

Theological reflection is an indispensable part of pastoral identity formation (See Figure 4).

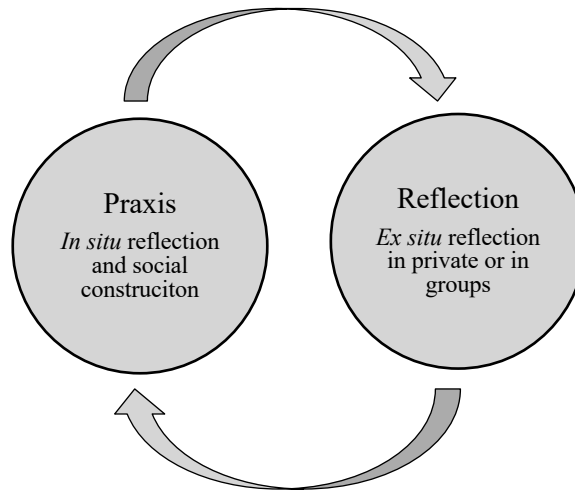


FIGURE 4: *The Pastoral Identity (Re)Formation Cycle*

For example, William Kincaid writes, “The practice of ministry calls for reflection, which in turn leads to reappraisal.”<sup>174</sup> John Patton agrees, observing that a pastor’s identity “is sustained by his or her ongoing dialogue with the role and function of minister and by the sense of pastoral identity that can develop as a result of participation in and reflection on that role and function.”<sup>175</sup> Because of this, reflection occupied a central place in the supervisory model developed by Clinical Pastoral Education.<sup>176</sup> John Patton explains, “This emphasis on the student’s emerging style is the practical impetus for CPE’s attempt to bring action into dynamic relation with being—what one is and what one does, each contributing to the enrichment of the other.”<sup>177</sup>

What is theological reflection? Patricia Killen and John DeBeer describe it as a circular process in

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174. Kincaid, *Finding Voice*, xiii.

175. Patton, *Pastoral Counseling*, 37.

176. Patton, *Pastoral Counseling* 48.

177. Patton, *Pastoral Counseling*, 48.

which “experience [is] correlated with tradition for the sake of praxis.”<sup>178</sup> Furthermore, Raymond Collins points out two purposes for such reflection: “to discern one’s operative theology” and to “contribute to a healthy sense of pastoral and personal identity.”<sup>179</sup>

When and where does this formative reflection occur? Authors like Patton, working with a more traditional view of pastoral identity, envision reflection as a primarily personal activity that occurs *ex situ*. That is, the pastor forms pastoral identity before, after, and outside of the performance of ministry. More recent, postmodern views usually understand the formation process occurring more *in situ*, or during the actual practice of ministry. For instance, Reinard Nauta writes, “Pastoral identity is developed when pastors go about doing their duties. It is influenced by social interactions, personal capabilities, and theological understandings.”<sup>180</sup> Likewise, Samuel Park dismisses the traditional “formation-first” model in favor of what he calls a “formation-practice-together” model.<sup>181</sup> According to him, “one does not first form pastoral identity and then perform pastoral practices accordingly. Rather, one forms and performs pastoral identity in practice at the same time. Thus, pastoral practitioners form their pastoral identities in the midst of their pastoral practices, and pastoral identity informs pastoral practices.”<sup>182</sup>

### *Factors of Pastoral Identity Formation*

Chapter II mentioned certain markers, or factors, which constituted personal identity. A few authors have also discussed the factors which form pastoral identity. Franz Shostrom’s review of literature found that *time* of involvement, *social feedback*, and *commitment* to responsibilities are

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178. Patricia Killen/John de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection* (New York: Crossroad, 2000), 61, quoted in Maureen R. O’Brien, “A Study of Ministerial Identity and Theological Reflection among Lay Ecclesial Ministers,” *International Journal of Practical Theology* 11, no. 2 (2007): 227.

179. Raymond F. Collins, *Models of Theological Reflection* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), 93, 95, quoted in Maureen R. O’Brien, “A Study of Ministerial Identity and Theological Reflection among Lay Ecclesial Ministers,” *International Journal of Practical Theology* 11, no. 2 (2007): 227.

180. Nauta, “Pastoral Communication,” 5.

181. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 190.

182. Park, *Pastoral Identity*, 190.



important factors in the formation of pastoral identity.<sup>183</sup> E. E. Thornton outlines three categories of determinative factors. First, *personal* factors include self-awareness, self-esteem, self-transcendence, and self-actualization. Second, *professional factors* are role models and mentors, ecclesiastical structures and role requirements, formal certifications and role designations, theological images of God, and one's faith community. Finally, *multivariant* factors such as genetic endowments, family of origin, and cultural and global realities influence the formation process.<sup>184</sup> Eugene Peterson, in *The Contemplative Pastor*, touches on several factors that are formative for pastoral identity. Among them are Scriptural images, biblical vocabulary and language; and wise historical predecessors.<sup>185</sup>

### *Three Key Authors*

Three authors in particular provide profitable insights into the process of pastoral identity formation. The first is Tanya Wittwer, who lists three possible metaphors for pastoral formation: essentialist metaphors which utilize images like 'sculpting,' organic ones which speak of growing or building, and narrative ones which "speak of storying pastoral identity."<sup>186</sup> She advocates the narrative approach. That is, "pastoral formation is co-authoring the story of one's identity as pastor."<sup>187</sup> Through performing the story, reflecting on performance, and re-authoring the story around preferred ways of being and doing, pastors "achieve the formation/transformation into that identity."<sup>188</sup> Finally, Wittwer recommends the use of a technique known as "the reflecting team" as a way to collaboratively reflect and re-author the pastor's identity.<sup>189</sup>

The second author is Maureen O'Brien, whose study of Roman Catholic lay ministers made

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183. Shostrom, "Professional Identity In Clergy," 8-9.

184. Thornton, "Identity, Pastoral," 567.

185. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor*, 16, 29, 30, 58.

186. Wittwer, "Storying Pastoral Identity," 20.

187. Wittwer, "Storying Pastoral Identity," 21.

188. Wittwer, "Storying Pastoral Identity," 22.

189. Wittwer, "Storying Pastoral Identity," 22-26.

several discoveries which apply to pastors in general.<sup>190</sup> Her research was built on two premises. The first is that *conversation* is integral to meaning making and identity construction.<sup>191</sup> Conversation with others and with God allows for “discursive construction of the self.”<sup>192</sup> Accordingly, she advocates collaborative learning groups that allow for “conversation-based theological reflection on ministerial practice.”<sup>193</sup> Her second premise is that the default mode of theological reflection for ministers is *narrative*.<sup>194</sup> Thus, formation requires learning to tell one’s story “in a disciplined way that presumes God’s work in the minister’s experiences..., seeks fundamental coherence and meaning, and is convinced that, in the telling, new insights emerge for both the storyteller and the audience.”<sup>195</sup> The goal is to look for “linkages” between their stories, the larger stories of their context, and the overarching Christian Story.<sup>196</sup>

Two major results emerge from O’Brien’s study. First, identity construction is a combination of self-understanding and the perception of others.<sup>197</sup> Second, she found that participants used ministerial “*touchstones*” to form and express their identity.<sup>198</sup> These “particular, compact, guiding phrases... served to ground and focus their approach to ministry.”<sup>199</sup> Moreover, touchstones served as “distilled and portable guides for effective and faithful ministerial practice.”<sup>200</sup> Examples included scripture verses and pithy phrases such as, “Treat others as you want to be treated,” and “Meet people where they are.”<sup>201</sup>

O’Brien also concluded that two settings are most effective for formative reflection: informal,

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190. Maureen R. O’Brien, “A Study of Ministerial Identity and Theological Reflection among Lay Ecclesial Ministers,” *International Journal of Practical Theology* 11, no. 2 (2007): 212–33.

191. O’Brien, “A Study of Ministerial Identity,” 214

192. O’Brien, “A Study of Ministerial Identity,” 215.

193. O’Brien, “A Study of Ministerial Identity,” 216.

194. O’Brien, “A Study of Ministerial Identity,” 216.

195. O’Brien, “A Study of Ministerial Identity,” 216-217.

196. O’Brien, “A Study of Ministerial Identity,” 217.

197. O’Brien, “A Study of Ministerial Identity,” 224.

198. O’Brien, “A Study of Ministerial Identity,” 224-226.

199. O’Brien, “A Study of Ministerial Identity,” 224.

200. O’Brien, “A Study of Ministerial Identity,” 224.

201. O’Brien, “A Study of Ministerial Identity,” 224-226.

individual ones and formal, group ones.<sup>202</sup> *Informal, individual reflection* was done by “stepping back” to reflect on ministry prayerfully with three goals in mind: greater ministerial effectiveness, assessment of faithfulness to God, and strengthening ministerial identity.<sup>203</sup> *Formal, group reflection* took place in meetings with supervisors which “enhanced their practice, or brought insights unavailable through less formal instruction.”<sup>204</sup> Both of these settings are *ex situ* forms of theological reflection. However, these findings show that pastors need continuing individual *and* group opportunities where formative theological reflection on ministry practice can occur.

The third author is William Kincaid, who refers to the pastoral identity formation process as “finding your voice as a minister.”<sup>205</sup> Kincaid lays out a six step process for pastoral identity formation in field education: 1) understanding where you are, 2) connecting to the greater faith story, 3) embracing the vocation of pastor, 4) discovering who you are as a person in ministry, 5) finding your place in the system, and 6) finding and embodying voice. Like many other authors, Kincaid advises pastors not to “confine experimentation in ministry to seminary internship” and claims that “[t]he pastoral life is one of continuous learning.”<sup>206</sup> He writes, “If you are serious about cultivating and discovering your pastoral voice, now and then you will need to live just beyond where your scripts function well, beyond where you existing skills suffice, and beyond the experiences that allow your current identity to remain intact.”<sup>207</sup>

Kincaid’s creatively uses 1 Samuel 17:31-40 as a paradigm for pastoral identity formation. In the biblical passage, Saul gives young David his armor in preparation for his battle with Goliath. David tries it on but finds it ill-fitting and puts it down. David then takes up the things he is familiar with—his staff, his sling, and some stones. According to Kincaid, this little vignette “describes a kind of internal sorting

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202. O’Brien, “A Study of Ministerial Identity,” 226-230.

203. O’Brien, “A Study of Ministerial Identity,” 226-227.

204. O’Brien, “A Study of Ministerial Identity,” 228.

205. Kincaid, *Finding Voice*, xii.

206. Kincaid, *Finding Voice*, xiv-vx.

207. Kincaid, *Finding Voice*, 89.

out that occurs when a person is held up for public examination.”<sup>208</sup> As such, he sees four stages of pastoral identity formation: *receiving from others*, *trying on*, *putting down*, and *taking up*.<sup>209</sup> These four steps show tension between the self-concept and social construction aspects of pastoral identity. The pastor must try on and sort out the many things that others give to him or her—role models, expectations, perceptions, narratives—in order to take up a pastoral identity that is unique, authentic, and effective. In psychological terms, these steps correspond to the processes of identification, experimentation, differentiation, and integration which are integral to the process of identity formation. Though this process is most acute in the early stages of preparation for ministry, Kincaid adds that “ministry’s vocational path continues to fork as long as you are on it, and you will be confronted repeatedly with decisions that ask you to embrace this and lay that down.”<sup>210</sup>

## 8. Pastoral Identity & Personal Identity

The literature shows a frequent concern for integrating the personal and pastoral identities in a healthy way. Whenever the personal and pastoral identities lose their distinction, integration, or balance, pastoral wellbeing is disrupted. For instance, William Hulme has observed that without a healthy integration pastors will either overshadow the office with their personal identity or hide their personal identity behind the office.<sup>211</sup> In an interview with the Barna Group, Peter Scazzero had this to say: “Our first work as spiritual leaders is to live *congruently*, which means we are the same person on and off the stage. Our roles and our souls must remain connected; this is our primary work and the greatest gift we can give others.”<sup>212</sup> This congruence, which is a hallmark of healthy pastoral identity, requires a keen understanding of the relationship between personal and pastoral identities. The goal is threefold: to adequately form each identity, to clearly differentiate the two, and to harmoniously integrate them.

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208. Kincaid, *Finding Voice*, 2.

209. Kincaid, *Finding Voice*, 3-12.

210. Kincaid, *Finding Voice*, 9.

211. Hulme, *Your Pastor’s Problems*, 74.

212. Barna, *The State of Pastors*, 33.

Personal identity achievement is the most basic prerequisite for pastoral identity. Thornton writes, “Pastoral identity, like all identity formations, presupposes the emergence in adolescence and early adulthood of relatively stable patterns of self-perception that are confirmed by significant others.”<sup>213</sup> Pastoral identity is also the product of ‘professionalization,’ which includes two parallel processes, the educational and the personal.<sup>214</sup> Therefore, pastoral identity is “a specific extension of identity in adulthood which arises out of one’s professional associations.”<sup>215</sup> And yet, pastoral identity has a way of expanding the personal identity as the two integrate. Shostrom claims that “there is an interrelationship between the person and the profession, that the psychological aspect of the person is affected by professional training ... Taking on a professional role, therefore, means expanding one’s identity by taking on a professional identity.”<sup>216</sup> Pastoral identity is not just an add on to personal identity. It is an extension and expansion of personal identity.

As pastoral identity forms, the pastor will experience an adjustment that can be distressing or disruptive. The personal identity will tend to be more stable and entrenched than the pastoral identity, especially in the early phases of becoming a pastor.<sup>217</sup> John Patton claims that this is because pastoral identity is “not as solidly formed” and is “only a portion of who I am.”<sup>218</sup> “In fact,” he claims, “it may sometimes be competitive with older dimensions of my ego identity.”<sup>219</sup> David Fisher vividly illustrates the conflicts associated with this identity adjustment with his own experience of becoming a pastor:

A new identity was laid on me, and I couldn’t be just me anymore. I didn’t think I liked that. I knew I didn’t like some of the stereotypes that accompanied the title *Reverend*.... I became increasingly uneasy being “something.” I didn’t like being defined by expectations, roles, and titles.... But I still felt like the old me despite the titles and role expectations.... The role of “The Reverend” was growing, but I knew deep inside it was still me. The distance between what people thought I was and who I knew I was seemed to be expanding.... I was concerned about their not being able to

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213. Thornton, “Identity, Pastoral,” 567.

214. Shostrom, “Professional Identity In Clergy,” 1.

215. Shostrom, “Professional Identity In Clergy,” 8.

216. Shostrom, “Professional Identity In Clergy,” 1, 3.

217. Patton, *Pastoral Counseling*, 49.

218. Patton, *Pastoral Counseling*, 50.

219. Patton, *Pastoral Counseling*, 50.

separate the role from the man. Besides, I had the nagging suspicion that most of them wouldn't love me as much if I were a lousy pastor.<sup>220</sup>

Fisher's account shows that pastors still feel very much like a person, while parishioners see them primarily as a pastor. This is why Gary Harbaugh has stated that "pastors are helped when a church explicitly acknowledges that *personal* identity precedes even ministerial identity."<sup>221</sup>

David Switzer writes about the "continual intertwining" of pastoral and personal identity "at every level of living and functioning."<sup>222</sup> He observes that "at the core of the self is 'minister,' a bound collection of self-images, values, faith, commitments, etc. I do not just *perform* a ministry; I *am* a minister."<sup>223</sup> He adds that the relationship between the personal and pastoral is complicated by the fact that pastors "are also symbols to others representing a reality larger than merely their own personhood."<sup>224</sup> Nevertheless he concludes, "Every pastor must continue to grow as a person in order to increase in effectiveness as a pastor," for all the competencies of the pastor "presuppose the quality of the personhood of the pastor."<sup>225</sup> Aware of such complications, William Arnold insists that pastoral identity "should be *an* expression of personal identity, but should not be viewed as *the* expression of personal identity."<sup>226</sup> He also recommends that pastors "design an aware and realistic rhythm of living—one that makes us effective in our pastoral role and at the same time leaves us protected and free to enjoy our personal identity in its broader dimensions."<sup>227</sup>

Whenever the relationship between personal and pastoral identities is skewed, many problems can occur in the pastor's experience or functioning. Serious cases can even lead to pastoral pathologies. This thesis-project has identified at least two that are worth noting: *disintegration* complexes and

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220. Fisher, *21st Century Pastor*, chap. 1.

221. Harbaugh, *Pastor as Person*, 77.

222. Switzer, "Pastor and Person," 63.

223. Switzer, "Pastor and Person," 56.

224. Switzer, "Pastor and Person," 52.

225. Switzer, "Pastor and Person," 60, 63.

226. Arnold, *Introduction to Pastoral Care*, 81.

227. Arnold, *Introduction to Pastoral Care*, 83.

*depersonalization* complexes.

### *Disintegration Complexes*

Disintegration complexes occur when there is a hard distinction without integration of the personal and pastoral identities, causing the two to remain disconnected. The pastor under-identifies with being a pastor while still trying to play the part. The pastor's life is bifurcated and compartmentalized excessively. Secrecy, hiding, and duplicity are hallmarks. This is a serious pathology that requires intervention.

Writing to a more general audience, Mark R. MacMinn has described the “the Jekyll/Hyde syndrome,” named for the fictional doctor who developed an alter ego as an outlet for gratifying his baser desires. This syndrome results a deeply divided and conflicted person with two contrasting sides: the “glossy side” and the “dark side.”<sup>228</sup> Disintegration complexes are basically pastoral versions of the Jekyll/Hyde syndrome. The pastor's identity splits into a public, pastoral self and a private, personal self.

Edward Bratcher describes another type of disintegration problem called the “professional mask:”

Many ministers put on masks because after years of loneliness no true emotion exist inside. Or if any emotion is left, it is not enough to provide warmth, love, compassion, sympathy, empathy—all those qualities that make a person human and make possible human relationships.... A mask—a lack of warmth—is often the result of not being able to cope with all the emotional demands that are made of them.<sup>229</sup>

William Hulme observed a similar phenomenon that he called a “professional front” that turns his vocation into role-playing.<sup>230</sup> Wearing a professional mask and role-playing are key indicators of disintegration in pastoral identity.

Paul David Tripp recounts a time when he suffered such disintegration:

There was a huge disconnect between my private persona and my public ministry life. The irritable and impatient man at home was a very different guy from the gracious and patient pastor our congregation saw in those public ministry and worship settings where they encountered me most.

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228. Mark R. McMinn, *The Jekyll/Hyde Syndrome: Controlling Inner Conflict through Authentic Living* (Newberg, OR: Barclay Press, 1996), 8-9.

229. Bratcher, *Walk-On-Water Syndrome*, 32.

230. Hulme, *Your Pastor's Problems*, 99-100.

I was increasingly comfortable with things that should have haunted and convicted me. I was okay with things as there were. I felt little need for change. I just didn't see the spiritual schizophrenia that personal ministry life had become.<sup>231</sup>

Tripp's "spiritual schizophrenia" and other disintegration complexes are pastoral pathologies that occur when this kind of disconnect between the personal and pastoral identities develops.

### *Depersonalization Complexes*

A second kind of pathology caused by a problem in relating the two identities is the depersonalization complex. This an opposite problem from disintegration. The pastor over-identifies with being a pastor so excessively that the personal identity is muted, denied, or forgotten altogether. The personal and professional identities are conflated to the point that they are no longer distinguishable. Pastoral identity substitutes for the personal, and disengagement from ministry becomes impossible.

In his book written to pastors, Paul Tripp seems to be particularly concerned with the problem of depersonalization among pastors.<sup>232</sup> The psychologist Archibald Hart is as well and describes the effects of depersonalization on the pastor's mental health this way:

I believe that one of the most important developmental tasks every minister must master is the task of separating his self-image from his role identity. There is a strong tendency for ministers to derive their self-image and thus their self-esteem from their vocational role. In other words, who they *are* is determined by what they *do*. Self-identity easily merges with role identity, so that it becomes increasingly difficult for ministers to separate themselves from their work and from the many roles they play as pastors.... There must be a clear boundary between what the self *is* and what the self *does*, if one is to be mentally healthy.... Confusing self-image and role identity only gets in the way of God's power to work through us in any vocational situation.<sup>233</sup>

Dr. Louis McBurney has noticed that "many ministers have no sense of personhood apart from their identity as pastor.... Some clergy seem to have a poorly defined identity structure apart from the vocational mask."<sup>234</sup> Why is this? McBurney theorizes, "For the minister, staying behind the mask may protect him from self-disclosure and vulnerability. For those in his world it maintains distance from a

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231. Tripp, *Dangerous Calling*, 18.

232. Tripp, *Dangerous Calling*, 22-23.

233. Hart, *Depression in the Ministry*, 22.

234. McBurney, *Counseling Christian Workers*, 34-35.



person endowed with priestly (and perhaps mystical) powers. The laity may feel a need to keep their minister in a superhuman status.”<sup>235</sup>

Perhaps the greatest danger for pastors is losing oneself altogether by over-identifying with being a pastor. Gary Harbaugh observes, “Most of the problems pastors experience in the parish are not caused by the pastor forgetting he or she is a pastor. Most difficulties pastors face in the parish arise when the pastor forgets that he or she is a person.”<sup>236</sup> Harbaugh further claims, “The personhood of the pastor is frequently swallowed up in the pastoral role.”<sup>237</sup> The answer, he says, is “finding oneself in Christ.”<sup>238</sup>

## **9. Pastoral Identity Assessment**

The only assessment tool discovered by this thesis-project was the Pastoral Professional Identity Scale (PPIS) developed and tested by Franz Shostrom.<sup>239</sup> However, it only proved effective for determining the presence of professional identity in clergy, not the degree or quality of its formation.<sup>240</sup> This outcome led Shostrom to conclude that “[p]erhaps it is an incorrect assumption to address the degree or strength of professional identity, but just simply its presence.”<sup>241</sup> He suggests that the PPIS could be used as a screening instrument by clinicians to assess whether a pastor has a pastoral identity or not.<sup>242</sup> It is doubtful, however, that those who provide counseling and care will encounter pastors with no pastoral identity. They are more likely to meet pastors with varying levels of clarity or health in their pastoral identity. So in the end, there is little use for the PPIS and there are no other known tools that provide reliable, quantitative assessment of pastoral identity.

While quantitative methods of assessment have yet to be developed, there are options for

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235. McBurney, *Counseling Christian Workers*, 34-35.

236. Harbaugh, *Pastor as Person*, 9.

237. Harbaugh, *Pastor as Person*, 72.

238. Harbaugh, *Pastor as Person*, 72.

239. Shostrom, “Professional Identity In Clergy,” 7.

240. Shostrom, “Professional Identity In Clergy,” 92.

241. Shostrom, “Professional Identity In Clergy,” 95.

242. Shostrom, “Professional Identity in Clergy,” 96-97.

qualitative assessment of pastoral identity. James Marcia's identity statuses are one such option. Building on the work of Erikson, Marcia studied college students and concluded that there are four identity statuses based on the dual factors of crisis and commitment: *achievement*, *moratorium*, *foreclosure*, and *diffusion*.<sup>243</sup> A person in the status of identity *achievement* has "experienced a crisis period and is committed to an occupation and ideology."<sup>244</sup> He or she has freely made decisions which differentiate himself or herself after a process of considering vocational options, assessing parental values and wishes, and evaluating beliefs and ideologies.<sup>245</sup> This status is characterized by stability, confidence, adaptability, and resilience. At the other end of the continuum, the person in the identity *diffusion* status may or may not have been through the crisis but has not made commitments in ideology or occupation.<sup>246</sup> This state is characterized by ambivalence, indifference, confusion, and anxiety.<sup>247</sup> The person in the status of identity *moratorium* is in the identity formation crisis but has yet to make commitments.<sup>248</sup> This status is different than diffusion in that there is active struggle for commitment despite the prevailing ambivalence and ambiguity.<sup>249</sup> Identity formation is on hold or stalled because the person is conflicted about options and is prevented from commitment by others' opinions.<sup>250</sup> Finally, the person in the *foreclosure* status expresses commitments without having gone through the crisis.<sup>251</sup> There is little differentiation between oneself and one's parents. Commitments are not really one's own, but are basically borrowed from one's upbringing. They have never been questioned, evaluated, or critiqued. A person in this status is characterized by rigidity and will become easily disillusioned or feel threatened if his commitments are challenged.<sup>252</sup>

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243. James E. Marcia, "Development and Validation of Ego-Identity Status." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 3, no. 5 (1966): 551.

244. Marcia, "Development and Validation," 551-552.

245. Marcia, "Development and Validation," 552.

246. Marcia, "Development and Validation," 552.

247. Marcia, "Development and Validation," 552.

248. Marcia, "Development and Validation," 552.

249. Marcia, "Development and Validation," 552.

250. Marcia, "Development and Validation," 552.

251. Marcia, "Development and Validation," 552.

252. Marcia, "Development and Validation," 552.

It might be productive to assess which status applies to a pastor's identity. If his or her status is anything other than *achieved*, then intervention is needed. The pastor's identity status could be determined by applying the criteria of crisis and commitment with the following questions. First, has the pastor been through a period of *crisis* in which the options for identity have been considered and evaluated or not? Second, has the pastor made *commitments* to pertinent traditions, doctrines, values, people, ways of being as a pastor, etc.? If the pastor's identity is in *diffusion*, there will be little clarity or strength, much ambiguity and ambivalence, and possibly some distress or anxiety. If the pastor's commitments are on hold, he or she will be in *moratorium*. If the pastor bypassed the formation crisis by borrowing commitments from a pastoral role model, pastoral identity will be in *foreclosure*. The intervention in each case would be to guide the pastor into a formation crisis and then to support the pastor in making necessary identity commitments.

This thesis-project's Triangular Pastoral Identity Model might be another qualitative tool for assessment. First, it could be used to assess the clarity and strength of the pastor's doctrine of pastoral office, self-concept, and social construction. Second, it could be used to determine if the wrong perspective is functioning in the normative position. Finally, it could be used to look for a healthy differentiation and integration of personal and pastoral identities. The parameter of this thesis-project, however, does not allow the testing of its effectiveness as an assessment tool.

## CHAPTER IV: PROJECT DESIGN

This thesis-project included five steps for testing its thesis. First, a curriculum for teaching the Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity was developed. Second, a pilot group of pastors was recruited. Third, a pre-test was administered to the pilot group participants. Fourth, the curriculum was presented to the pilot group of pastors in a four-hour seminar. Finally, a post-test was given to the pilot group participants to gauge the usefulness of the Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity.

### 1. Curriculum Development

The project started by developing a four-lesson curriculum designed to teach the Triangular Pastoral Identity Model to a pilot group of pastors. The overarching goal was to help participants grasp the model in order to discuss its applications and assess its usefulness. The first lesson introduced the topic of pastoral identity and the Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity. The remaining three lessons focused on each of the three perspectives of the model (normative, existential, situational). Each lesson ended with discussion questions to allow participants the opportunity to process the content and interact with each other. The basic outline of the curriculum is presented below in this chapter and the full outline of the presentation slides is attached as an appendix.

### 2. Pilot Group Participants

It was decided that a pilot group setting was the most conducive to testing the model. The research phase of this thesis-project consistently encountered comments about the value of pastoral cohorts and peer groups for the pastoral care of pastors.<sup>1</sup> For instance, Matt Bloom has found that pastors need a social support system around them consisting of *significant* others, *similar* others, and congregations and denominational leaders.<sup>2</sup> He claims that “similar others can help sustain or restore another pastor’s call to ministry. They are very important for helping other pastors sustain a positive

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1. Cf. Bob Burns, Tasha D. Chapman, and Donald C. Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us About Surviving and Thriving* (Downer’s Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013), 282-295.

2. Matt Bloom, *Flourishing in Ministry: How to Cultivate Clergy Wellbeing* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), chap. 7.

pastoral identity. Similar others can express true companionship and convey to another pastor that he or she belongs in ministry and is regarded as a worthy pastoral colleague.”<sup>3</sup> Many, like Edward Bratcher, recommend that groups be interdenominational in makeup to facilitate openness and to reveal that the minister’s stresses “cut across denominational lines.”<sup>4</sup> It is also usually suggested that the groups be facilitated by a qualified leader in order to promote a balanced combination of structure, challenge, and support.<sup>5</sup> Finally, in order to foster openness and security, it is important for these groups to be independent of the power structures of the pastor’s denomination (or congregation) and free of the normal responsibilities of the pastor.<sup>6</sup>

To recruit the pilot group, an invitation email was sent out to a wide sample of known pastors in the Wilmington, NC area. The recipients were told the subject of the project and the time, date, and location of the seminar. A ‘by invitation’ approach was taken in order to find pastors who had the time and interest to participate.

Twelve pastors from a variety of denominations and traditions accepted the invitation to participate. They represented Presbyterian (EPC, PCA, ECO), Baptist, Episcopal, and Non-denominational traditions. A majority of the participants had at least ten years of ministry experience. Only one had less than five. The ages of participants ranged from thirty-five to fifty-one. Not by design, all twelve participants happened to be of the male gender. Nine were senior/solo pastors, two were assistants/associates, and one was a campus minister.

### **3. Pre-Test**

Once they confirmed their involvement, each participant received an online pre-test by email. They were asked to complete it before attending the seminar. The pre-test was developed using the online

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3. Bloom, *Flourishing in Ministry*, 87.

4. Edward B. Bratcher, *The Walk-On-Water Syndrome: Dealing with Professional Hazards in Ministry* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1984), 112.

5. Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry*, 292-293.

6. Donald C. Houts, “Pastoral Care of Pastors,” in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, ed. by Rodney J. Hunter (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 830, 832.

survey software, Google Forms. Responses were anonymous.

The pre-test consisted of twenty-eight questions and was based on the learning objectives of each lesson. It served as an assessment *for* learning by gauging each participant's attitudes toward, understandings of, and status of pastoral identity. Beside a few short answer responses, the pre-test mainly used multiple choice responses. Likert scale choices were favored because of their ability to gauge attitudes, knowledge, and perceptions. After gathering some basic demographic information, participants were asked the following questions:

- How familiar are you with the concept of pastoral identity?
- David Fisher, in *The 21st Century Pastor* writes, "Back in 1954, H. R. Niebuhr wrote about the church and ministry and called the pastorate the 'perplexed profession.' Niebuhr correctly suggested that the crisis in ministry is primarily a crisis of identity. The communities in which we work no longer value our product or our role the way society once honored the church and its ministry. We are providing a service to a world that no longer wants it. Professional religious leaders are an anachronism in a secular culture. Even our congregations wonder about us." How much do you agree with his assessment? In general, are pastors 'perplexed' today?
- How clear is your answer to the question, "Who am I as a pastor?"
- How well do you understand how pastoral identity is formed (or re-formed)?
- Have you ever experienced a pastoral identity crisis?
- Could you identify a pastoral identity crisis in yourself?
- How confident are you to use reflection as a way of clarifying your pastoral identity?
- Are you able to see the opportunity as well as the danger in a pastoral identity crisis?
- How often are you conscious of metaphors or images (e.g. shepherd) that guide your practice of ministry?
- Please list any guiding metaphors/images of which you are conscious.
- How familiar are you with the concept of 'pastoral office'?
- How important do you think pastoral identity is for pastoral functioning?
- How well do you understand the relationship between your 'personal' identity and your 'pastoral' identity?
- How aware are you of your parishioners' conceptions of what a pastor is or ought to be?

- Do you believe your interactions with people you minister to influences your pastoral identity?
- Do you believe your ministry context influences your pastoral identity?
- How well do you understand the relationship between your ministry and Christ's?
- How important do you believe pastoral identity is for developing 'resilience' in ministry?
- Do you think a clear pastoral identity can help you define and measure 'success' in ministry?
- Do you think a clear pastoral identity is useful for preventing 'burnout'?
- Rate your ability to manage the pressures and demands of ministry.
- Rate your ability to manage conflict in ministry.
- Rate your ability to manage others' expectations of you in ministry.

Finally, the participants were asked to rate their interest in attending the seminar and learning more about pastoral identity. No one chose, "Honestly, I'm not interested at all. I'm just trying to help Rob out" or "Mildly interested." Two responded, "Moderately interested." Four responded, "Interested." And half chose, "Very interested."

#### **4. Curriculum Presentation**

The curriculum was presented at a half-day seminar in a scenic room overlooking the Intracoastal Waterway between nine o'clock in the morning and one o'clock in the afternoon. It was designed to be a mini-retreat for the participants. Short breaks in between lessons and a lunch afterward allowed the participants to get to know each other, to share a little about their experiences in ministry, and to discuss their reactions to the content. The four lessons of the curriculum were presented in thirty-minute presentations followed by twenty minutes of guided group discussion. The presentations included mini-lectures; a slide-show with graphics, quotes, and outlines; and group discussion questions.<sup>7</sup> Below is the scope and sequence of the curriculum.

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7. See Appendix A for the complete slideshow.

## *Lesson 1: Intro to Pastoral Identity*

### Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this lesson, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the nature and importance of pastoral identity.
2. Recognize a pastoral identity crisis (past, present, or future) in their own ministry.
3. List, compare, and contrast the model's three perspectives on pastoral identity.
4. Explain how pastoral identity is formed and re-formed.

### Presentation Outline

- I. Explanation of this Thesis-Project
  - A. Pastoral Identity and the Pastoral Care Movement
- II. Intro to Pastoral Identity
  - A. What Is Pastoral Identity?
  - B. The Importance of Pastoral Identity
- III. Intro to The Triangular Pastoral Identity Model
  - A. Triperspectivalism Explained
  - B. The Triangular Model
- IV. Pastoral Identity Crises
  - A. Symptoms
  - B. Survey of the Chronic Pastoral Identity Crisis in the Church
  - C. The Pastoral Identity (Crises) of Jesus
- V. The Pastoral Identity (Re)formation Loop

### Discussion Questions

1. Briefly describe a time when you had a pastoral identity crisis.
2. How clear is your pastoral identity right now?
3. Critique this quote: "Back in 1954, H. R. Niebuhr wrote about the church and ministry and



called the pastorate the “perplexed profession.” Niebuhr correctly suggested that the crisis in ministry is primarily a crisis of identity. The communities in which we work no longer value our product or our role the way society once honored the church and its ministry. We are providing a service to a world that no longer wants it. Professional religious leaders are an anachronism in a secular culture. Even our congregations wonder about us.” -David Fisher, *The 21st Century Pastor*

## *Lesson 2: The Normative Perspective: Pastoral Identity as Pastoral Office*

### Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this lesson, participants will be able to:

1. Discuss the importance of having a normative perspective on pastoral identity.
2. Describe the common components of the pastoral office
3. Compare the three kinds of pastoral authority
4. Articulate a doctrine of the pastoral office in harmony with their own denomination/tradition.
5. Utilize pastoral office to manage expectations in ministry.

### Presentation Outline

- I. Keeping the Pastoral Office Christ-Centered
- II. The Need for a Norm in Pastoral Identity
- III. The Components of Pastoral Office
- IV. The Old Testament Offices
- V. Biblical Images and Metaphors for Pastoral Office
- VI. Pastoral Office and Pastoral Identity Crises
- VII. A Triangular Model of Calling
- VIII. A Triangular Model of Authority

### Discussion Questions

1. What images guide you in the practice of ministry?
2. Which biblical role models have most influenced your view of the pastoral office?
3. How would you summarize your traditions understanding of the pastoral office?

4. How does 'your' ministry relate to Christ's?
5. Why do you think it is important to have a norm for pastoral identity?

### *Lesson 3: The Existential Perspective: Pastoral Identity as Self-Concept*

#### Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this lesson, participants will be able to:

1. Explain pastoral identity as a self-concept.
2. Reflect on their own self-concept of pastoral identity.
3. Articulate their own self-concept of pastoral identity.
4. Be able to explain the relationship between personal and pastoral identities.
5. Derive confidence to minister from a clear pastoral self-concept.

#### Presentation Outline

- I. Pastoral Identity as Self-Concept
- II. Four Identity Statuses
- III. The Relationship Between Personal and Pastoral Identities
- IV. Identity in Christ
- V. Important Aspects of Self-Concept
- VI. Self-Concept Formation: David and Saul's Armor as Paradigm
- VII. The Evolution of the Self
- VIII. Providential Calling
- IX. Personal Authority
- X. Counter-transference and Self-Concept

#### Discussion Questions

1. Which pastors have most influenced your ministry?
2. What is the truest thing about you as a pastor?
3. Why are pastors so prone to neglecting or denying their humanity?

4. How has your personal story shaped your pastoral identity?

#### *Lesson 4: The Situational Perspective: Pastoral Identity as Social Construction*

##### Learning Objectives:

Upon completion of this lesson, participants will be able to:

1. Explain pastoral identity as a social construct.
2. Identify influential understandings of pastoral identity in their context.
3. Interpret their ministry context (micro and macro)

##### Presentation Outline

- I. Human Beings are Social Beings
- II. Is Pastoral Identity a Social Construct?
- III. How Is Pastoral Identity Socially Constructed?
- IV. Reinard Nauta's Pastoral Communication Model
- V. Managing Expectations, Role Ambiguity, & Role Conflict

##### Discussion Questions

1. How does your church view you as a pastor?
2. How do you tend to view the people to whom you minister?
3. How does our culture view pastors in general?
4. What is the most difficult thing about your ministry context?
5. How do others help you form or clarify your pastoral identity?
6. How has your context changed you for the better?

### **5. Post-Test**

Immediately following the seminar, a post-test was sent to participants via email. They were asked to complete it as soon as was convenient while the curriculum was fresh in their minds. Whereas the pre-test served as an assessment *for* learning, the post-test acted as an assessment *of* learning. It was

shaped by the thesis which claimed that the Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity is an effective method for 1) understanding and resolving pastoral identity crises, 2) discussing and teaching the concept of pastoral identity, and 3) re-forming and enhancing pastoral identity, all of which may be useful as an intervention in the pastoral care and counseling of pastors. Also like the pre-test, it gathered both qualitative and quantitative data and relied primarily on Likert scale multiple choice responses. Answers were anonymous.

First, the post-test asked participants about their level of agreement with the following statements:

1. Overall, I was satisfied with the seminar.
2. The seminar was a valuable experience.
3. The information was interesting and clearly presented.
4. The information in the seminar will be helpful in my ministry.

Next, the post-test asked four open-ended, short-answer questions to invite feedback and suggestions:

5. What did you find *least* helpful?
6. What did you find *most* helpful?
7. What changes would you suggest?
8. What were the one to three main take aways for you?

Then, the participants were asked rate their level of agreement with the following statements:

9. The seminar helped me clarify my pastoral identity.
10. The seminar gave me a better understanding of how pastoral identity is formed (or re-formed).
11. My ability to identify a pastoral identity crisis in myself has improved because of this seminar.
12. The seminar improved my ability to use reflection as a way of clarifying my pastoral identity.
13. The seminar increased my understanding of the importance of pastoral identity.
14. The seminar helped me become more aware of images that guide my ministry.
15. The seminar's model of pastoral ministry was easy to grasp.

16. The seminar's model of pastoral identity is a useful tool for conceptualizing and discussing pastoral identity.
17. I will use the seminar's model to navigate challenges I face in ministry.
18. The seminar improved my understanding of the relationship between my 'personal' identity and my 'pastoral' identity.
19. The seminar increased my understanding of how my pastoral identity is influenced by my ministry context.
20. The seminar deepened my understanding of the connection between my ministry and Christ's.
21. The seminar's model of pastoral identity will help me be more resilient in ministry.
22. The seminar's model of pastoral identity will help me measure success in ministry.
23. The seminar's model of pastoral identity will help me prevent burnout in ministry.
24. The seminar's model of pastoral identity will help me cope with the pressures and demands of ministry.
25. The seminar's model of pastoral identity will help me manage conflict in ministry.
26. The seminar's model of pastoral identity will help me manage other's expectations of me in ministry.
27. This seminar would benefit other pastors.

## CHAPTER V: OUTCOMES

### 1. Critical Reflection on Feedback

#### *Pre-Test Results<sup>1</sup>*

The pre-test was designed to gauge the status of the pilot group's understanding of and attitude towards pastoral identity and its related topics before they attended the seminar. The first set of questions aimed at *pastoral identity* in general. Half of the participants (six) reported a basic understanding of pastoral identity, a third (four) reported a vague understanding of it, and the small remainder (two) chose, "It sounds familiar, but I don't know what it means." As for the clarity of their own pastoral identity, only one pastor chose 'very clear,' two-thirds (eight) reported "clear," and one-fourth (three) responded "somewhat clear." Furthermore, most (eleven) had a good grasp of the relationship between their personal and pastoral identities, though one pastor did not understand it at all. Finally, a solid majority (nine) of the pastors also had a good understanding of the relationship between their ministry and Christ's ministry.

The next set of questions had to do with *pastoral identity crises*. When asked whether they agreed with David Fisher's quote about an ongoing pastoral identity crisis in the church, one person strongly agreed, half of the pastors (six) agreed, one-third (four) disagreed, and just one strongly disagreed. Two-thirds (eight) of the twelve participants reported having experienced a pastoral identity crisis at some point in their ministry. Two had not, and two were unsure. Almost half (five) of the pastors were unsure about their ability to detect a pastoral identity crisis in themselves. Almost all (ten) of the pastors said they were able to see both the danger *and* the opportunity in a pastoral identity crisis.

Another set of questions focused on the *images and metaphors* of ministry. A majority of the pastors claimed they were 'often' conscious of the images and metaphors which guide their ministry praxis. When asked to name such guiding images, all reported at least one. Some listed several. Not surprisingly, the most common was 'shepherd,' being reported by ten of the twelve pastors. Images reported more than once were prophet/visionary, servant/minister, watchman, father, and counselor. Other

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1. See Appendix B for the detailed results of the Pre-Test.

images and metaphors reported only once were minister of reconciliation, farmer/gardener, leader, elder, teacher, example, priest, king, lighthouse, midwife, steward, and pioneer. It was surprising that teacher,

<i>Images That Guide My Practice of Ministry</i>	
Shepherd	10
Prophet/Visionary	4
Servant/Minister	3
Watchman	2
Father	2
Counsellor	2

TABLE 1

steward, and servant/minister were not mentioned more frequently. Most of the images were biblical in origin. When asked about their familiarity with the biblical concept of the pastoral office, three-fourths (nine) had a basic understanding of it, but only one-fourth (three) felt they understood it well enough to be able to explain it to others.

A few questions were intended to evaluate their understanding of the process of *pastoral identity formation*. Half of the pastors described their understanding of the process by choosing, “I get it, but it’s a little fuzzy.” One-fourth (three) had a basic grasp, two pastors had no clue. Only one pastor claimed to understand it very well. When it came to confidence in using reflection to clarify their pastoral identity, responses ranged from “somewhat confident” to “very confident.”

Yet another set of questions asked about participants’ understanding of the *social construction* of pastoral identity. It was assumed that this area would find a low level of understanding and agreement. The pastors had varying levels of awareness of their parishioners’ conceptions of a pastor. Only five reported “aware,” and none reported “very aware.” Surprisingly, most (ten) agreed that their interactions with people to whom they minister influences their pastoral identity. Only two disagreed with the idea. There was slightly stronger agreement (eleven) with the idea that ministry context influences pastoral

identity.

The final set of questions surveyed views on the connection between pastoral identity and *pastoral function*. All saw the importance of pastoral identity for functioning, with half calling it “very important.” All the participants thought that a clear pastoral identity could help promote resilience, define and measure success, and prevent burnout. Related to this, pastors were then asked to rate themselves on several key abilities. Seven felt capable of managing the pressures and demands of ministry, but five felt only moderately capable. Seven participants felt capable of managing conflict in ministry, but five felt only moderately (four) or mildly (one) capable. Five of the twelve felt capable to manage other’s expectations of them in ministry, whereas seven felt only moderately or mildly capable.

### *Seminar Participation*

There was a high level of enthusiastic participation in the seminar by each of the twelve pastors. From the time the pastors arrived, there seemed to be an eagerness for fellowship and discussion. During the presentations, everyone was engaged, interested, responsive. It was obvious that the topic resonated with them. Consequently, it was not hard to get the pastors talking about the discussion questions. In fact, more time was needed. In the future, the format needs to be more balanced between teaching and discussion. Several times throughout the seminar, pastors arrived at new insights about their pastoral identity as they reflected together on the material. That was exciting to witness.

At different times throughout the morning, several pastors offered unsolicited, positive feedback about the Triangular Model and the content of the presentations. A few mentioned that others would benefit from it and suggested that it be offered periodically. Some suggested other possible venues where it should be presented. Others expressed a desire to be a part of meetings like this one more often. One person even said that the curriculum would be well suited for an annual retreat for pastors. This feedback was encouraging and hinted at the positive potential of the Triangular Model; but to gather feedback in a more methodical manner, a post-test was administered the next day.



### *Post-Test Results<sup>2</sup>*

The first set of questions in the post-test evaluated the general quality of the seminar. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Overall, everyone was satisfied with the seminar and agreed that it was a valuable experience. Moreover, everyone either agreed or strongly agreed that the information was interesting and clearly presented and that it will be helpful in their ministry.

When asked what was least helpful or what changes they would suggest, three clear themes emerged. First, there was *too much information*. One pastor shared, “There wasn’t one unhelpful section as such, but there was a lot of content overall for a course. I would look for ways to identify key insights from each section and trim content that doesn’t support these.” Second, the content was *too complex* and needs to be simplified. There was excessive technical jargon which needed translation and too many complex ideas which needed explanation. Someone even mentioned that the quotes in the lessons were often less clear than the presenter’s comments on them. Third, participants complained that there was *not enough time* for discussion and reflection. For example, one pastor wrote, “I would have valued additional time for personal conversation and application because the content was of such a high quality!”

When the participants were asked what they found most helpful, the most common response (seven) was the Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity. One pastor shared that it “prompted me to reflect on identity as a pastor in new ways.” Another said it “helped provide handles to better understand PID [pastoral identity] and where it is was most likely to be malformed or broken.” One pastor cited the pastoral formation cycle as most helpful, another cited the five components of pastoral office, and one cited the management of expectations.

The second set of questions asked the pilot group pastors to evaluate what effect the seminar had on their own pastoral identity. All agreed that the seminar increased their understanding of the importance of pastoral identity, with three-fourths (nine) strongly agreeing. Ten pastors agreed or strongly agreed that it helped clarify their pastoral identity. Two were undecided. All thought it gave them a better

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2. See Appendix C for more details results of the Post-Test.

understanding of how pastoral identity is formed or re-formed and improved their ability to identify a pastoral identity crisis in themselves. All but one in the group agreed that the seminar improved their ability to use reflection to clarify their pastoral identity. Ten pastors claimed that their participation made them more aware of the images and metaphors which guide their ministry. The same number thought that their understanding of the relationship between personal and pastoral identity improved. All agreed that the seminar deepened their understanding of the connection between Christ's ministry and theirs. Finally, all agreed or strongly agreed that it increased their grasp of how their pastoral identity is influenced by their involvement in ministry.

The final set of questions focused on the Triangular Model in particular. All but one found the model easy to grasp and all either agreed or strongly agreed that it is a useful tool for conceptualizing and discussing pastoral identity. Ten pastors said they would use the model to navigate pastoral challenges. Two were unsure. Next, the participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with the helpfulness of the Triangular Model in a variety of applications (See Table 2 below). There was strong agreement that it would help with building resilience, measuring success, preventing burnout, coping with the pressures and demands of ministry, resolving conflict, and managing other's expectations. Finally, there

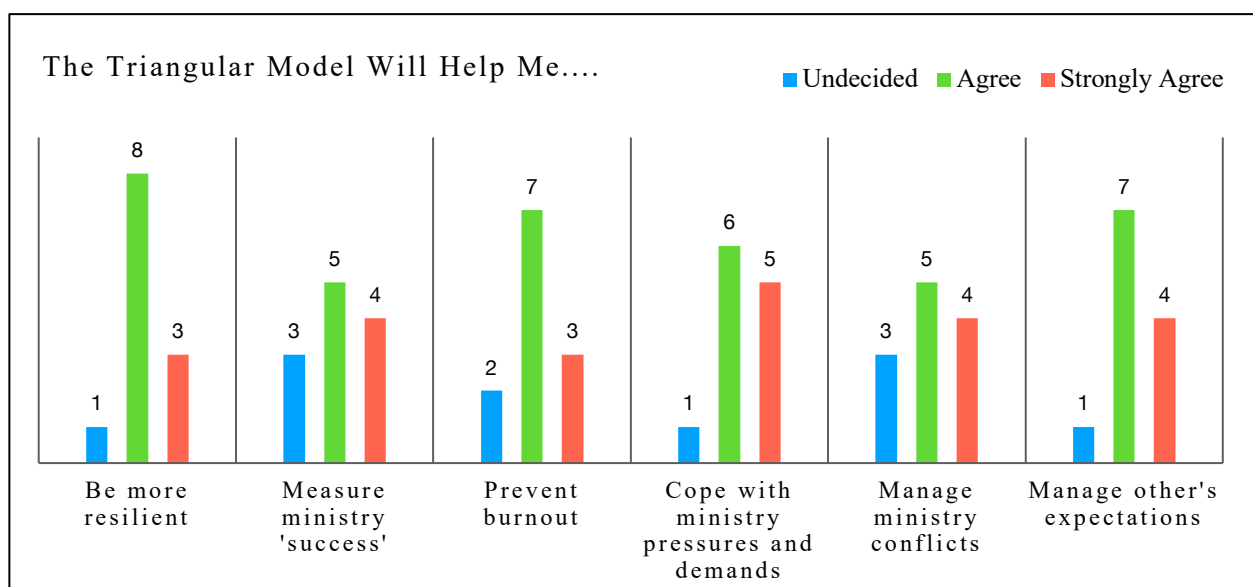


TABLE 2: *Useful Applications of The Triangular Model*

was unanimous and hearty agreement that the model would benefit other pastors.

## 2. Conclusions Reached

Based on such feedback from the pilot group, this thesis-project concludes that there is strong support for its thesis, which claimed that the Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity is an effective method for 1) understanding and resolving pastoral identity crises, 2) discussing and teaching the concept of pastoral identity, and 3) re-forming and enhancing pastoral identity, all of which may be useful as an intervention in the pastoral care and counseling of pastors. First, The Triangular Model of Pastoral

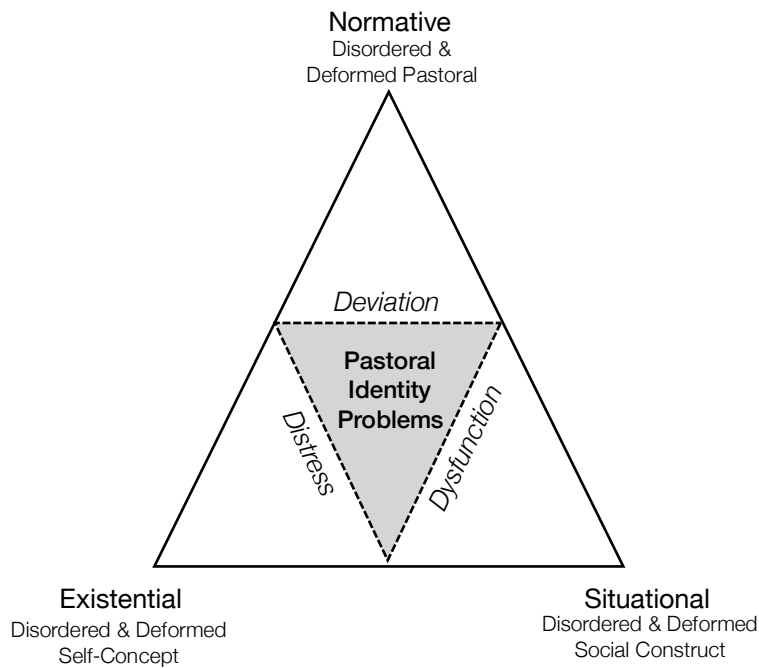


FIGURE 2: *A Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity Crises*

Identity showed promise as a tool for assessing, discussing, and treating pastoral identity problems. Both the feedback during the seminar and the post-test results showed it enabled pastors to grasp, discuss, and evaluate these crises. The graphic depicting a triangular model of pastoral identity crises was particularly well-received (see Figure 2). It seems safe to say that pastors and those who care for them will find this model and its graphic depiction useful for determining the nature and causes of a pastoral identity crisis

by looking for distortions in each of the angles or by assessing whether the wrong perspective is in the normative position. They will also find it helpful for planning ways to resolve the crisis. Such a plan could involve realigning with pastoral office, re-ordering and re-forming the self-concept, and adjusting pastoral functioning.

Second, the Triangular Model was found to be a very effective tool for discussing and teaching the concept of pastoral identity in general. In the post-test, most of the participants listed it as the most helpful takeaway from the seminar. As a pedagogical tool, it benefited the presenter by providing a convenient, concise outline for organizing the lessons. Several pastors indicated in the post-test that they found the graphic of the model particularly helpful for visualizing what is a somewhat abstract concept. During the seminar, the pastors in the pilot group picked up the model quickly and easily. It gave ‘handles’ for grasping the concept and provided a ‘language’ for discussing the multifaceted topic of pastoral identity. It was interesting to watch the pastors begin to use the terminology of the model and to look at pastoral identity from each of the model’s perspectives as they turned it back and forth in their minds. It also proved to be a ‘portable’ and memorable tool. Even months after the seminar, some of the participants can still recite the model and its three perspectives.

Third, the seminar had a positive effect on the (re)formation of the participants’ pastoral identities. This was most likely due to the combination of the peer group setting, the curriculum content, and Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity. However, it shows that the model itself has a clarifying and strengthening effect on pastoral identity when presented in this kind of setting. Although more than two-thirds of the pilot group claimed to have a clear pastoral identity before the seminar, ten pastors indicated in the post-test that the seminar increased the clarity of their pastoral identity. Furthermore, the pastors unanimously agreed that the seminar improved their understanding of how pastoral identity is (re)formed. Likewise, all but one said it increased their ability to use reflection to enhance their pastoral identity. All reported growth in their comprehension of how ministry praxis and context influence pastoral identity. In addition, almost all left with a higher level of awareness of the images and metaphors which have formed their pastoral identity and which guide their praxis. Finally, since most of the pastors thought the model

would be beneficial for building resilience, measuring success, preventing burnout, coping with the pressures and demands of ministry, resolving conflict, and managing other's expectations, the model should be useful for enhancing key areas of pastoral identity and functioning.

### **3. Areas for Further Study**

This thesis-project focused on the usefulness of the Triangular Model for treating pastoral identity crises because these were seen as central to addressing other pastoral problems. However, a future area of study would be the effectiveness of the Triangular Model as an intervention for particular pastoral problems. For example, would it be effective at treating *pastoral pathologies* like the ones cited in this thesis-project (burnout, superhuman complex, disintegration complex, etc)? Also, it would be worthwhile to study ways the model could be applied to various *pastoral challenges*, such as interpersonal conflict, role conflict and ambiguity, expectations, stress, etc.

Even though the pilot group represented a fairly diverse sample of major ecclesiastical traditions, all of its participants were male, came from the majority white culture, and lived in Wilmington, NC. Further study is needed to test the the Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity with female pastors, pastors of other ethnic and cultural minority groups, and pastors of other geographical regions. Would it be as effective or well-received in those other settings and with more diverse groups of participants? How would it need to be adapted? The participation of such pastors would certainly provide helpful feedback that would improve the relevance and usefulness of the model.

This thesis-project was also limited to a pilot group setting. It might be profitable to study how to adapt the curriculum for use in other group settings, such as ongoing pastoral cohorts, pastoral retreats, or continuing education seminars. The review of literature discovered the importance of pastoral cohorts and reflection groups for pastoral health and pastoral identity formation. It also found that theological reflection is often more formative when conducted in groups rather than individually. Plus, there was considerable feedback from the pilot group requesting more time to discuss and process the content and to have the opportunity to participate in more meetings like the pilot group. The next phase of testing this

curriculum would be to expand on the pilot group test and spread the curriculum lessons across four monthly, half-day meetings. This would allow more time for discussion, reflection, and application. It would have the added benefit of allowing for individual reflection in the time between the monthly sessions. Pastors could share insights they had or changes they tried since the last session and get feedback from the group. A weekend retreat for pastors could adapt the format of the pilot group seminar to allow more break time between the lessons. A continuing education seminar would need to distill the content into one lecture and follow it with an extended time of discussion in breakout groups.

There are two other settings in which the Triangular Model might hold promise. First, it would be worth studying its application in clinical settings where counselors and therapists are working individually with pastors. Yet another setting for future study is the seminary. How could theological and pastoral educators use the Triangular Model to teach the concept of pastoral identity and to form pastoral identity in prospective pastors?

Finally, it might be beneficial to develop for pastors and their caregivers a list of practical recommendations of how to apply the Triangular Model to their ministry. A primary list of recommendations would include such items as: don't lose your 'self' in ministry, keep your identity in Christ, embrace your humanity, align yourself with the pastoral office, manage metaphors and educate others on your pastoral identity, perceive the perceptions of your people, inhabit your place, interpret your context (pastoral Hermeneutics, cultural IQ), resolve role ambiguity and role conflict, and commit to a pastoral cohort. In other words, a much more comprehensive curriculum could be developed on the basis of the Triangular Model which could help educators and caregivers guide pastors through the life-long challenge of forming and re-forming their pastoral identity.

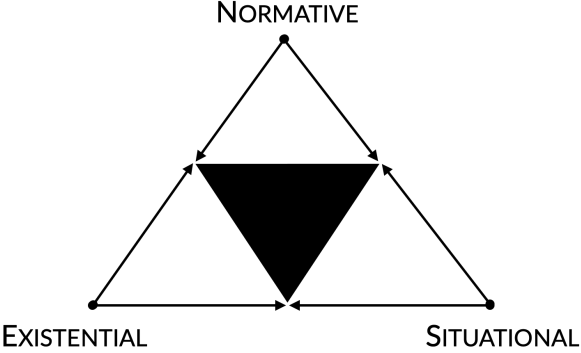
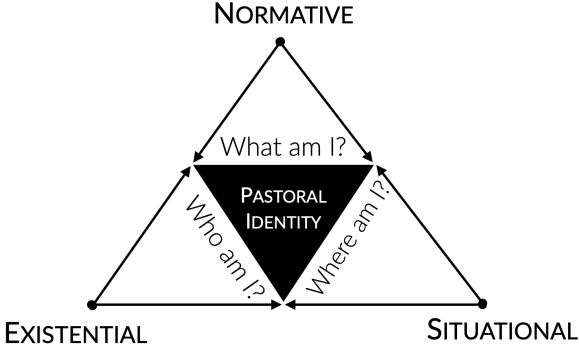
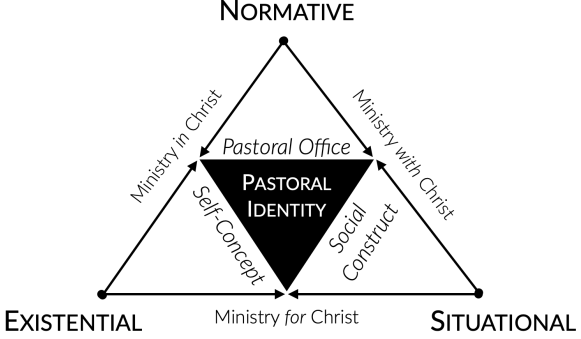
## APPENDIX A: CURRICULUM PRESENTATION SLIDE SHOW

Slide #	Content
1	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Pastoral Identity in Perspective</b>  <b>A Triangular Model</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Rob Hamilton 2021</p>
2	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Lesson 1:</b>  <b>Pastoral Identity in Perspective</b></p>
3	<p><b>Learning Objectives</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Upon completion of this lesson, participants will be able to:</li> <li>2. Describe the nature and importance of pastoral identity.</li> <li>3. Recognize a pastoral identity crisis (past, present, or future) in their own ministry.</li> <li>4. List, compare, and contrast the three perspectives of this curriculum's model of pastoral identity.</li> <li>5. Explain how pastoral identity is formed and re-formed.</li> </ol>
4	<p><b>PID and the Pastoral Care Movement</b></p> <p>Study has been done on pastoral identity has taken place primarily in two settings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <u>Seminaries</u> [PID formation]: to prepare students for ministry, incorporate PID into their pedagogy, curriculum, and field education</li> <li>2. <u>Chaplaincy &amp; Pastoral Counseling</u> [PID Maintenance]: providing a specialized ministry in a secular, interdisciplinary setting (e.g., a hospital) put strain on the caregiver's pastoral identity.</li> </ol>
5	<p><b>This Project</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This project assumes that Pastoral Identity (PID) has a wider use</li> <li>• This project applies discoveries in the field of pastoral care and counseling regarding PID to parish pastors by developing a model of PID.</li> <li>• Pastors face three categories of problems: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pastoral identity issues</li> <li>2. Pastoral challenges in ministry</li> <li>3. Pastoral pathology in function</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Can this PID model provide a framework for addressing these three types of problems?</li> </ul>
6	<p><b>This Project</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This project also assumes that studies in the behavioral sciences re: identity are relevant and valuable by way of analogy for understanding PID</li> </ul>
7	

	<p><b>What is Pastoral Identity?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PID is notoriously hard to define.</li> <li>• No commonly accepted definition</li> <li>• Various synonyms (professional identity, etc.)</li> </ul>
8	<p><b>What is Pastoral Identity?</b></p> <p>John Patton described it as:  <i>“Something that can be discerned as an inner awareness of being a duly authorized representative of a Christian community of faith.”</i></p> <p>E. E. Thornton has offered a definition:  <i>“The relatively enduring pattern of attachments, behaviors, and values characteristic of persons providing religious ministries, usually but not necessarily referring to seminarians and ordained clergypersons.”</i></p>
9	<p><b>What is Pastoral Identity?</b></p> <p>Franz Shostrom attempted to develop a tool to assess PID. His partial definition is:</p> <p><i>“It addressed issues of the faith of the person, a sense of call to the profession of ministry, his or her relation to the Church, educational preparation, development of pastoral skills, self-awareness and an ability to use oneself as a tool. In pastoral professional identity these are integrated into the personality of the minister and are a natural, comfortable part of the person’s make-up.”</i></p>
10	<p><b>What is Pastoral Identity?</b></p> <p>Samuel Park’s [shortened] definition from empirical research:</p> <p><i>“Pastoral identity refers to, but is not limited to, a social construction of pastoral relationships created in the process of dynamic interactions among care partners, culture, and the Divine in a specific care-giving context.... Such a constructed pastoral identity pays attention to calls from seekers as well as God and, thereby, opens the way to creative transformation through mutual interactions between the care partners. This renewed definition includes three important aspects of pastoral identity: pastoral identity as identity-in-pastoral relationships, as a twofold calling, and as a pastoral trans-formation.”</i></p>
11	<p><b>What is Pastoral Identity?</b></p> <p>PID is the answer to the question, <i>“Who am I as a pastor?”</i></p>
12	<p><b>Different Historical Definitions of PID</b></p> <p><i>“In the twentieth century, studies on pastoral identity have evolved from viewing it as individual interiority of the pastoral person to seeing it as an interpersonal construction.”</i>  —Samuel Park, <i>Pastoral Identity as Social Construction</i></p>
13	

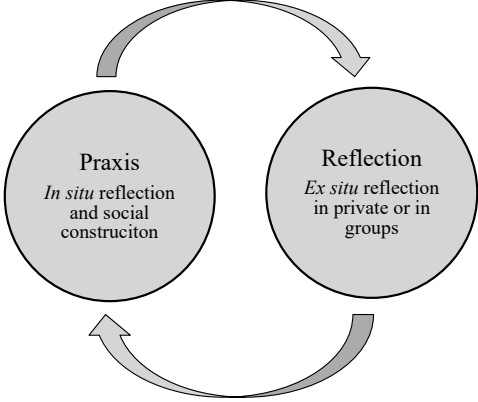


	<p><b>Different Historical Definitions of PID</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th><b>Traditional</b></th><th><b>Contemporary</b></th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Romantic/Modern</td><td>Post-Modern</td></tr> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More psychological focus</li> <li>• Monological</li> <li>• Individual interiority</li> <li>• Fixed/Stable</li> <li>• Intrinsic Essence/Property/Capability</li> <li>• Theological and ecclesial commitment</li> <li>• Being a representative</li> <li>• Conceptual and abstract</li> <li>• Developmental</li> <li>• Inequality between pastor and person</li> <li>• Formation first</li> <li>• Inner-directed</li> </ul> </td><td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More sociological focus</li> <li>• Dialogical</li> <li>• Intersubjective</li> <li>• Emerging/Fluid</li> <li>• Temporal and Situational</li> <li>• Social function and role</li> <li>• Interactional</li> <li>• Relational</li> <li>• Mutually and Socially Constructed</li> <li>• Equality between pastor and person (care partners)</li> <li>• Formation during</li> <li>• Other-directed</li> </ul> </td></tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Similar development in views of the <i>Imago Dei</i></td></tr> <tr> <td>Substance/Structure</td><td>Relational</td></tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Credit: Samuel Park, <i>Pastoral Identity as Social Construction</i></p>	<b>Traditional</b>	<b>Contemporary</b>	Romantic/Modern	Post-Modern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More psychological focus</li> <li>• Monological</li> <li>• Individual interiority</li> <li>• Fixed/Stable</li> <li>• Intrinsic Essence/Property/Capability</li> <li>• Theological and ecclesial commitment</li> <li>• Being a representative</li> <li>• Conceptual and abstract</li> <li>• Developmental</li> <li>• Inequality between pastor and person</li> <li>• Formation first</li> <li>• Inner-directed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More sociological focus</li> <li>• Dialogical</li> <li>• Intersubjective</li> <li>• Emerging/Fluid</li> <li>• Temporal and Situational</li> <li>• Social function and role</li> <li>• Interactional</li> <li>• Relational</li> <li>• Mutually and Socially Constructed</li> <li>• Equality between pastor and person (care partners)</li> <li>• Formation during</li> <li>• Other-directed</li> </ul>	Similar development in views of the <i>Imago Dei</i>		Substance/Structure	Relational
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14	<p><b>The Importance of Pastoral Identity</b></p> <p><i>“With clarity and integrity of being, you as a Christian pastors do and do not do many things.... Your functions are determined by your inner sense of identity and integrity or lack of it.... From this you draw your guidance as to the nature of your task. By means of this you resolve conflicting expectations of yourself by others.”</i></p> <p>—Wayne Oates, <i>The Christian Pastor</i></p>										
15	<p><b>The Importance of Pastoral Identity</b></p> <p><i>“If you are to do your work well, refreshing strength must be afforded you from a coherent vision of your identity.”</i></p> <p>—Wayne Oates, <i>The Christian Pastor</i></p> <p>According to Yale professor Gaylord Noyce, clergy burnout results more from a “blurred pastoral identity” than from overwork.</p> <p>—<i>Pastoral Ethics</i></p>										
16	<p><b>The Importance of Pastoral Identity</b></p> <p>“Pastoral identity is of tremendous importance, not only providing pastoral persons with values, meanings, and boundaries for their ministries but also helping them maintain proper relationships with their care partners, faith communities, the Divine, institutions, and other professionals.”</p> <p>—Samuel Park, <i>Pastoral Identity as Social Construction</i></p>										

17	<p><b>Triperpectivalism</b></p> <p>John Frame &amp; Vern Poythress Theological method based on epistemological theory Trinitarian view of reality <i>Perichoresis</i> (Interpenetration) Each perspective incorporates the others</p> 
18	<p><b>The Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity</b> <i>Key Questions</i></p> 
20	<p><b>The Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Triperspectival</li> <li>• Christ-Centered</li> <li>• Functional</li> </ul> 
21	<p><b>PID Model</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If any factor is missing, PID will lack authority, balance, specificity, and effectiveness.</li> <li>• A biblical norm prevents individuality or context from distorting PID</li> <li>• Who I am must be in harmony with what a pastor is and what my context requires.</li> </ul>

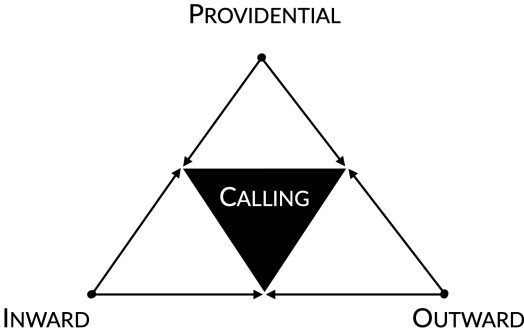
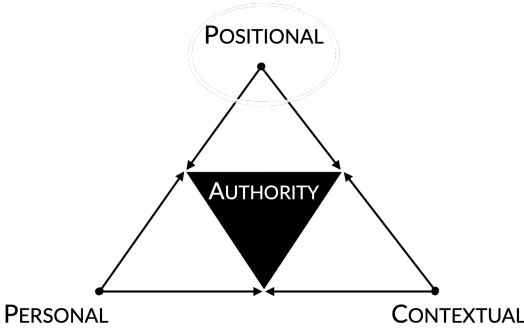
22	<p><b>Triangular Model: Pastoral Identity Crises</b></p>
23	<p><b>Symptoms of Pastoral Identity Crisis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenge</li> <li>• Conflict</li> <li>• Confusion</li> <li>• Questioning</li> <li>• Timidity</li> <li>• Ambivalence</li> <li>• Anxiety</li> <li>• Temptation</li> <li>• Opportunity!</li> </ul>
24	<p><b>Symptoms of Pastoral Identity Crisis</b></p> <p><i>“I am misunderstood by most of the people who call me pastor. Their misunderstandings are contagious, and I find myself misunderstanding: What am I? What is my proper work? I look around. I ask questions. I scout the American landscape for images of pastoral work. What does a pastor do? What does a pastor look like? What place does a pastor occupy in church and culture?”</i></p> <p>—Eugene Peterson, <i>The Contemplative Pastor</i></p>
25	<p><b>Symptoms of Pastoral Identity Crisis</b></p> <p>James Côte and Charles Levine’s description of personal identity crises is helpful in diagnosing a PID crisis. They are “<i>characterized by a subjective sense of identity <u>confusion</u>, a behavioral and characterological <u>disarray</u>, and a <u>lack of commitment</u> to recognized roles in a community.</i>”</p> <p>—from <i>Identity Formation, Agency, and Culture</i></p>
26	<p><b>The Chronic Pastoral Identity Crisis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some periods of church history—Medieval Roman Catholic and Reformation—had very clear, definite PID; others characterized by confusion or vagueness.</li> <li>• The last 100 years in US has been plagued with a chronic PID crisis.</li> <li>• 1930s Professor Mark May reported a confusion about nature of ministry</li> <li>• 1954: H. Richard Niebuhr called pastorate “perplexed profession.”</li> <li>• 1956: Samuel Blizzard’s article “The Minister’s Dilemma” about ambivalence and ambiguity in pastors</li> <li>• 1960s: Willam Hulme noted pastors suffered from “ministerial inferiority” and “loss of prestige” as he “now stands on the outside looking in.”</li> </ul>

27	<p><b>The Chronic Pastoral Identity Crisis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1970: Jeffrey Hadden wrote that “the crisis of identity for the Protestant clergyman” was one of the four major crises facing the Church.</li> <li>• 1971: Urban Holmes wrote that ministers in the 1800s were the <i>stupor mundi</i> (wonder of the world) but have become <i>stupidus mundi</i> (the stunned by the world)</li> <li>• 1980: Lloyd Rediger wrote article on clergy burnout pointing out the complexity of pastoral identity</li> <li>• Mid-1980s: Louis McBurney named the crisis of identity as one of the major problem areas pastors face.</li> <li>• 1989: Eugene Peterson claimed PID begged for redefinition (i.e. reject cultural definitions for Scriptural)</li> </ul>
28	<p><b>The Chronic Pastoral Identity Crisis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1991: David Larson wrote “clearly the pastor-teacher is enveloped in a critical identity crisis in our time.”</li> <li>• 1992: Eugene Peterson published <i>Under the Unpredictable Plant</i> about vocational idolatry and shared a PID crisis of his own.</li> <li>• 1995: John E. Johnson published article in <i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i> claiming many pastors experience PID crises and offered OT offices as solution.</li> <li>• 1996: David Fisher renewed Niebuhr concern about the “perplexed profession” in the 21st Century Pastor.</li> </ul>
29	<p><b>The Chronic Pastoral Identity Crisis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2012: Paul Trip published <i>Dangerous Calling</i> in which identity and PID was a major theme.</li> <li>• 2016: Francis Schaeffer Institute for Church Leadership published update to it’s 30 year study of pastors which included warnings about PID crises</li> <li>• 2020: COVID-19 pandemic. According to Barna, 29% of pastors <i>seriously</i> considered a career change.</li> </ul>
30	<p><b>The Pastoral Identity (Crises) of Jesus</b></p> <p>“If you are the Son of God...”</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Early Success in Capernaum (Mark 1:35-38; Luke 4:42-43)</li> <li>2. Peter’s Rebuke (Matt 16:21-23)</li> </ol>
31	<p><b>The Pastoral Identity (Crises) of Jesus</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. The Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-42)</li> <li>4. The Footwashing (John 13:1-5)</li> </ol>

32	<p><b>The Pastoral Identity (Crises) of Jesus</b></p> <p>“A vision of his identity both challenged Jesus to lay down his life and at the same time gave him satisfaction that ‘the world knew not of.’ The vision must have been renewed daily in our Lord Jesus Christ through his worship in intimate communion with the Father, through his powerful interchanges with the expectations of his disciples, and through his responses to the shepherdless multitudes who sought his ministry. It can hardly be different for the Christian pastor today who, as undershepherd of the Good Shepherd, is an authentic person under God, not just a walking job description.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">—Wayne Oates, <i>The Christian Pastor</i></p>
33	<p><b>Pastoral Identity (Re)Formation Loop</b></p> <p>“Pastoral Identity is developed when pastors go about doing their duties. It is influenced by social interactions, personal capabilities, and theological understandings.... Their experiences as a pastor deepen their understanding of what it means for them to be a pastor.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">-Reinard Nauta</p> 
34	<p><b>Pastoral Identity (Re)Formation Loop</b></p> <p>“One does not first form pastoral identity and then perform pastoral practices accordingly. Rather, one forms and performs pastoral identity in practice at that same time. Thus, pastoral practitioners form their pastoral identities in the midst of their pastoral practices, and pastoral identity informs pastoral practices.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">—Samuel Park, <i>Pastoral Identity as Social Construction</i></p>
35	<p><b>For Discussion</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Briefly describe a time when you had a pastoral identity crisis.</li> <li>2. How clear is your pastoral identity right now? What is unique about it?</li> <li>3. Critique this quote: “Back in 1954, H. R. Niebuhr wrote about the church and ministry and called the pastorate the “perplexed profession.” Niebuhr correctly suggested that the crisis in ministry is primarily a crisis of identity. The communities in which we work no longer value our product or our role the way society once honored the church and its ministry. We are providing a service to a world that no longer wants it. Professional religious leaders are an anachronism in a secular culture. Even our congregations wonder about us.” -David Fisher, <i>The 21st Century Pastor</i>.</li> </ol>

36	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Lesson 2:</b>  <b>The Normative Perspective</b>  <i>Pastoral Identity as Pastoral Office</i></p>		
37	<p><b>Learning Objectives</b></p> <p>Upon completion of this lesson, participants will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Discuss the importance of having a normative perspective on pastoral identity.</li> <li>2. Describe the common components of the pastoral office.</li> <li>3. Describe positional authority.</li> <li>4. Summarize the pastoral office in harmony with their respective denomination or tradition.</li> <li>5. Utilize pastoral office to set priorities and manage expectations in ministry.</li> </ol>		
38	<p><b>The Triangular Model</b>  <b>The Normative Perspective:</b>  <i>Pastoral Identity as Pastoral Office</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">EXISTENTIAL      Ministry for Christ      SITUATIONAL</p>		
39	<p><b>A Christ-Centered Pastoral Office</b></p> <p><i>“All the varied activities of the pastor have a single center: life in Christ. Pastoral theology seeks to point to that center in credible contemporary language and to see every single function in relation to that center. The center is Christ’s own ministry for and through us, embodied in distortable ways through our language, through the work of our hands, and quietly through our bodily presence.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">-Thomas Oden, <i>Pastoral Theology</i></p>		
40	<p><b>Foundation and Framework</b></p> <p>David Fisher in <i>The 21st Century Pastor</i> argues that Christ should be the <u>foundation</u> for pastoral identity and the Apostle Paul should be the <u>framework</u>.</p>		
41	<p><b>The Need for a Norm</b></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Something will be your norm!</li> <li>• Helps define and measure success</li> <li>• Provides boundaries</li> <li>• Sets priorities</li> </ul> </td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gives confidence and authority</li> <li>• Promotes authenticity</li> <li>• Aides decision-making</li> <li>• Helps conflict management</li> <li>• Guides management of expectation</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </table>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Something will be your norm!</li> <li>• Helps define and measure success</li> <li>• Provides boundaries</li> <li>• Sets priorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gives confidence and authority</li> <li>• Promotes authenticity</li> <li>• Aides decision-making</li> <li>• Helps conflict management</li> <li>• Guides management of expectation</li> </ul>
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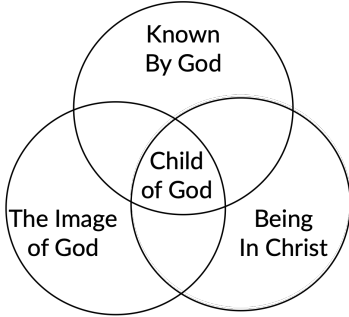
42	<p><b>The Need for a Norm</b></p> <p><i>“If pastoral identity is only born in pastoral relationships with the helped, then the identity is likely to be shaky as well as fluid, and inclusive but not grounded. A clear relationship with God and connection to the theological community and tradition is an important aspect of what it means to be pastoral.”</i></p> <p>—Samuel Park, <i>Pastoral Identity as Social Construction</i></p>
43	<p><b>The Need for a Norm</b></p> <p><i>“Only through a conscientious and constant reference to the Biblical understanding of the church and what it is in the plan and purpose of God can we find who the pastor-teacher is and what proper function in that office is to be.”</i></p> <p>—David Larsen, <i>Caring for the Flock</i></p>
44	<p><b>Pastoral Office Components</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Calling &amp; Ordination</li> <li>2. Authority &amp; Accountability</li> <li>3. Responsibilities &amp; Duties</li> <li>4. Purposes &amp; Goals</li> <li>5. Resources &amp; Tools</li> </ol>
45	<p><b>The Biblical Offices</b></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; width: 30%;"> <p>Old Testament</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prophet</li> <li>• Priest</li> <li>• King</li> <li>• (Sage)</li> </ul> </div> <div style="text-align: center; width: 20%;"> <p>CHRIST</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; width: 30%;"> <p>New Testament</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apostle</li> <li>• Prophet</li> <li>• Evangelist</li> <li>• Pastor-Teacher</li> <li>• Elder/Overseer</li> <li>• Deacon</li> </ul> </div> </div>
46	<p><b>Biblical Images &amp; Metaphors for PID</b></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shepherd</li> <li>• Ambassador</li> <li>• Diakonia (Servant)</li> <li>• Companion/Guide</li> <li>• Good Samaritan</li> <li>• Teacher</li> <li>• Preacher/Herald (Kerygma)</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counselor</li> <li>• Physician of the Soul</li> <li>• Fisher of Men</li> <li>• Steward</li> <li>• Farmer/Sower</li> <li>• Architect/Builder</li> <li>• Mother/Father</li> <li>• Friend</li> </ul> </div>

47	<p><b>Pastoral Office &amp; Pastoral ID Crisis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deviation from and distortion of pastoral office</li> <li>• Something else becomes the norm</li> <li>• Role Confusion</li> <li>• Vocational Amnesia</li> <li>• Abuse of authority or loss of authoritativeness</li> <li>• Overshadowing office with personality or hiding behind office</li> <li>• Success measured but something else: approval, numbers, etc.</li> </ul>
48	<p><b>Calling in Perspective</b></p>  <p>The diagram illustrates 'Calling in Perspective'. It features a large triangle with an inverted black triangle in the center labeled 'CALLING'. Above the top vertex is the word 'PROVIDENTIAL'. Below the bottom-left vertex is 'INWARD', and below the bottom-right vertex is 'OUTWARD'. Arrows connect the three vertices of the large triangle, forming a cycle.</p>
49	<p><b>Authority in Perspective</b></p>  <p>The diagram illustrates 'Authority in Perspective'. It features a large triangle with an inverted black triangle in the center labeled 'AUTHORITY'. Above the top vertex is the word 'POSITIONAL'. Below the bottom-left vertex is 'PERSONAL', and below the bottom-right vertex is 'CONTEXTUAL'. Arrows connect the three vertices of the large triangle, forming a cycle.</p>
50	<p><b>For Discussion</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What images guide you in the practice of ministry?</li> <li>2. Which biblical role models have most influenced your PID?</li> <li>3. How would you summarize the pastoral office in your tradition?</li> <li>4. How does “your” ministry relate to Christ’s?</li> <li>5. Why do you think it is so important to have a norm for pastoral identity?</li> </ol>



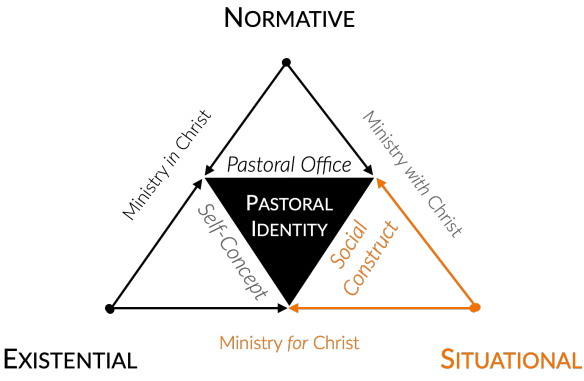
51	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Lesson 3:</b>  <b>The Existential Perspective</b>  <b>Pastoral Identity as Self-Concept</b></p>
52	<p><b>Learning Objectives</b></p> <p>Upon completion of this lesson, participants will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain pastoral identity as a self-concept.</li> <li>2. Articulate their own self-concept of pastoral identity.</li> <li>3. Differentiate and integrate personal and pastoral identities.</li> <li>4. Derive confidence to minister from a clear self-concept.</li> </ol>
53	<p><b>The Triangular Model</b>  <b>The Existential Perspective:</b>  <b>Pastoral Identity as Self-Concept</b></p>
54	<p><b>Self-Knowledge</b></p> <p><i>“Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But, while joined by many bonds, which one precedes and brings forth the other is not easy to discern. In the first place, no one can look upon himself without immediately turning his thoughts to the contemplation of God...Again, it is certain that man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God’s face, and then descends from contemplating him to scrutinize himself.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">—John Calvin, <i>Institutes of the Christian Religion</i></p>
55	<p><b>Horizontal and Vertical Identity</b></p> <p>“Human beings are always assigning to themselves some kind of identity. There are only two places to look. Either you will be getting your identity vertically, from who you are in Christ, or you will be shopping for it horizontally in the situations, experiences, and relationships of your daily life. This is true of everyone, but I am convinced that getting one’s identity horizontally is a particular temptation for those in ministry.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">—Paul Tripp, <i>Dangerous Calling</i></p>
56	<p><b>Paul’s View of Persons</b></p> <p><i>“Indeed, whether Paul even thought in terms of persons is a debated question. I think that he did, but not with an abstract or individualistic concept ‘person.’ Rather, he displays a functional understanding of human beings as relationally constituted agents who are both <u>embodied</u> and <u>embedded</u> in their world.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">—Susan Grove Eastman, <i>Paul and the Person: Reframing Paul’s Anthropology</i></p>

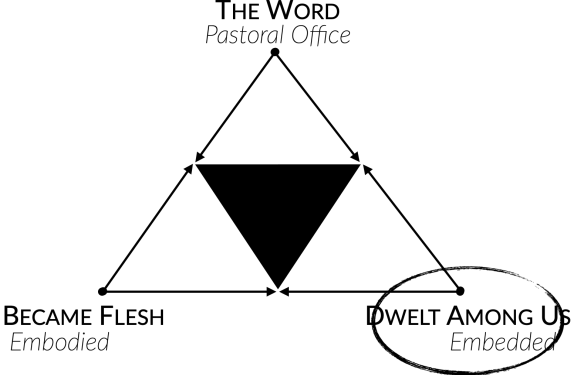
57	<p><b>Pastoral Identity as Self-Concept</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-concept is what I say about me, a mental model of myself as pastor</li> <li>• The self-concept is a personal construct and a social construct</li> <li>• Aspect of PID that is most powerfully experienced by pastors</li> <li>• Self-concept is constantly under revision</li> <li>• Self-concept is developed while doing ministry and reflecting</li> <li>• Self-concept has a narrative structure: past, present, future</li> <li>• It is a framework through which we see, interpret, and respond</li> </ul>
58	<p><b>Pastoral Identity as Self-Concept: Reinard Nauta</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “As a personal construct it refers to identity evaluations concerning one’s past and future, to judgments of self-worth, and to beliefs of hope and aspiration.”</li> <li>• “The self conception is a conception by the self about the self: something I say about me. One of the functions of the self-concept is a cognitive one, to organize the data of experience. As such it can be seen as a set of self-schemes, general beliefs about the self, that organize past experiences and are used to recognize and interpret relevant stimuli in the social environment.”</li> <li>• “Practicing their role, working as a pastor, they learn to express their particular style and habitus of pastoral work.”</li> <li>• “In a very personal sense, many pastors experience their ministry as intensely self-expressive and fulfilling.... The pastoral self-concept becomes the core element in the pastor’s personal identity.”</li> </ul>
59	<p><b>Personal Identity Statuses (Erik Erikson &amp; James Marcia)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foreclosure (Commitment without Exploration)</li> <li>• Moratorium (Exploration without Commitment)</li> <li>• Diffused (No Exploration or Commitment)</li> <li>• Achieved (Exploration and Commitment)</li> </ul>
60	<p><b>Personal Identity &amp; Pastoral Identity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The two must be differentiated and integrated</li> <li>• Pastoral identity should grow out of a health personal sense of identity</li> <li>• Pastoral identity becomes an integral part of personal identity</li> <li>• <u>Problem</u>: over-identifying or under-identifying with pastoral identity</li> <li>• <u>Problem</u>: self-concept lacks clarity due to lack of objectivity, feedback</li> <li>• Pete Scazzero: “Our first work as spiritual leaders is to <u>live congruently</u>, which means were are the same person on and off the stage. Our roles and our souls must remain connected; this is out primary work and the greatest gift we can give others.”</li> </ul>

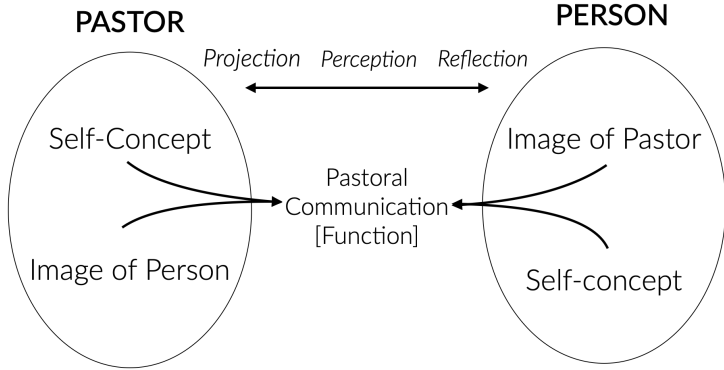
61	<p><b>Traditional Identity Markers</b></p> <p>Essential but inadequate foundations for identity (Galatians 3:28)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Race, ethnicity, nationality</li> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• Gender and sexuality</li> <li>• Physical and mental capacity</li> <li>• Family of origin</li> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Occupation</li> <li>• Possessions</li> <li>• Religion</li> <li>• Personality and Character</li> </ul>
62	<p><b>Identity in Christ: Brian Rosner</b></p> 
63	<p><b>Identity in Christ: Neil Anderson</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am <i>accepted</i> in Christ (Do I Belong?)</li> <li>• I am <i>significant</i> in Christ (Am I Loved?)</li> <li>• I am <i>secure</i> in Christ (Am I safe?)</li> </ul>
64	<p><b>Important Applications of Self-Concept</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embracing Humanity (needs, limitations)</li> <li>• Identity in Christ as Redeemed Sinner</li> <li>• Providential Calling/Personal History</li> <li>• Embodying Pastoral Office</li> <li>• Self-Awareness</li> <li>• Self-Care</li> </ul>

65	<div>Traditional vs. Postmodern View of Self</div> <div><table><tr><th>Romantic/Modern</th><th>Post-Modern</th></tr><tr><td><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Single, core, stable self</li><li>• The heart, mind</li><li>• Identity bestowed/given</li></ul></td><td><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• De-centered, De-essenced</li><li>• Relational</li><li>• Created by socio-historical context</li><li>• Opposed to idea of core self</li><li>• Always in progress</li><li>• Usually unconsciously operating</li><li>• Relatively provisional</li><li>• Multiple</li><li>• Identity created</li><li>• "Impression management" (image oriented)</li><li>• Other-directed (radar for patterns and trends)</li></ul></td></tr></table><div>Credit: Samuel Park, Pastoral Identity as Social Construction</div></div>	Romantic/Modern	Post-Modern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Single, core, stable self</li><li>• The heart, mind</li><li>• Identity bestowed/given</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• De-centered, De-essenced</li><li>• Relational</li><li>• Created by socio-historical context</li><li>• Opposed to idea of core self</li><li>• Always in progress</li><li>• Usually unconsciously operating</li><li>• Relatively provisional</li><li>• Multiple</li><li>• Identity created</li><li>• "Impression management" (image oriented)</li><li>• Other-directed (radar for patterns and trends)</li></ul>					
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66	<div>Self-Concept Formation</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identification (w/ role models, mentors, images, etc)</li><li>• Experimentation (trying out possibilities)</li><li>• Differentiation (rejecting what does not fit)</li><li>• Integration (retaining and incorporating what fits)</li><li>• Projection (how you want others to see you)</li><li>• Reflection (feedback from others)</li></ul>									
67	<div>Personal and Social Construction of PID</div> <div>David and Saul’s Armor (I Samuel 17:38-40)</div> <div><table><tr><th>“Trying On”</th><th>“Putting Off</th><th>“Taking Up”</th></tr><tr><td>David tried Saul’s armor</td><td>David put off Saul’s armor</td><td>David took up his own</td></tr><tr><td>“Then Saul clothed David with his armor. He put a helmet of bronze on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail, and David strapped his sword over his armor. And he tried in vain to go, for he had not tested them. (v. 38-39)</td><td>“Then David said to Saul, “I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them.” So David put them off.” (v. 39)</td><td>“Then he took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones from the brook and put them in his shepherd’s pouch. His sling was in his hand, and he approached the Philistine” (v. 40).</td></tr></table><div>Credit: William B.Kincaid. Finding Voice: How Theological Field Education Shapes Pastoral Identity. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012.</div></div>	“Trying On”	“Putting Off	“Taking Up”	David tried Saul’s armor	David put off Saul’s armor	David took up his own	“Then Saul clothed David with his armor. He put a helmet of bronze on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail, and David strapped his sword over his armor. And he tried in vain to go, for he had not tested them. (v. 38-39)	“Then David said to Saul, “I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them.” So David put them off.” (v. 39)	“Then he took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones from the brook and put them in his shepherd’s pouch. His sling was in his hand, and he approached the Philistine” (v. 40).
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68	<div>Providential Calling and Self-Concept</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Related to the inward and outward—prepares the called one for the calling.</li><li>• Outward prepares place for person, providential prepares person for place.</li><li>• All aspects of person up to the moment: personality, family, ethnicity, education, etc.</li><li>• Reaches back beyond the inward and outward call to before our birth (Gal. 1:15; cf. Jer. 1:5)</li><li>• As we reflect back on our lives, we see God was at work in all things to prepare us.</li></ul>									

69	<p><b>Self-Concept &amp; Personal Authority</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self as called and equipped.</li> <li>• Emphasizes the pastor's self as most valuable resource.</li> <li>• Authority based on integrity/character vs. position</li> <li>• Enhances the humble confidence and prioritized discernment needed for pastoral work.</li> <li>• Makes one's ministry authentic and authoritative</li> </ul>
70	<p><b>The Choice Fruit of Pastoral Authority</b></p> <p><i>"Pastoral identity flowers and with it comes the choice fruit of pastoral authority," which "inheres in a pastor's prayer life and a clear identification as a representative of God, of a religious tradition, and of a specific congregation. Pastoral authority then permeates one's gestures of caring, the rituals of ecclesiastical functioning, and the specialized services requiring exceptional competence."</i></p> <p>—E. E. Thornton</p>
71	<p><b>Countertransference &amp; Self-Concept</b></p> <p>Key to self-awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fears</li> <li>• Unmet needs</li> <li>• Wounds/Trauma</li> <li>• Sin</li> <li>• Avoidance</li> <li>• Prejudices</li> <li>• Immaturity</li> </ul>
72	<p><b>For Discussion</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Which pastors have most influenced your ministry?</li> <li>2. What is the 'truest' thing about you as pastor?</li> <li>3. Why are pastors so prone to neglecting their humanity?</li> <li>4. How has your story shaped your pastoral identity?</li> </ol>
73	<p><b>Lesson 4:</b>  <b>The Situational Perspective</b>  <i>Pastoral Identity as Social Construct</i></p>
74	<p><b>Learning Objectives</b></p> <p>Upon completion of this lesson, participants will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain pastoral identity as a social construct.</li> <li>2. Identify influential understandings of pastoral identity in their context.</li> <li>3. Interpret their micro context (the church).</li> <li>4. Interpret their macro context (the surrounding society).</li> </ol>

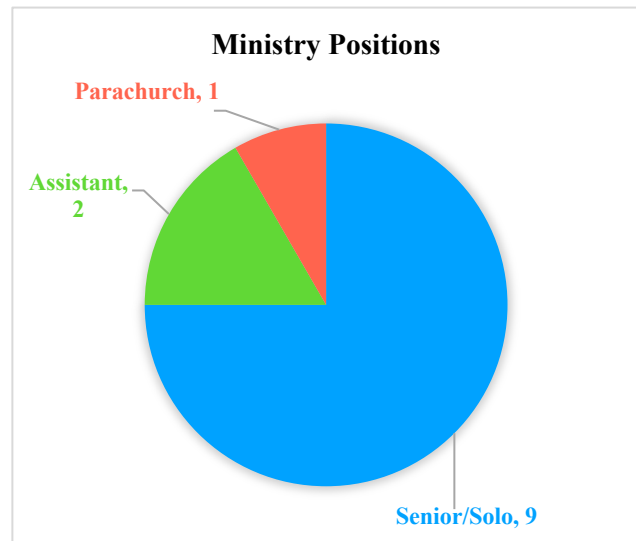
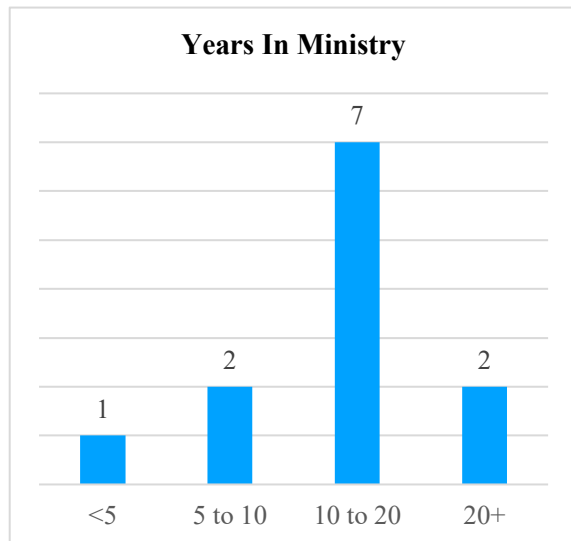
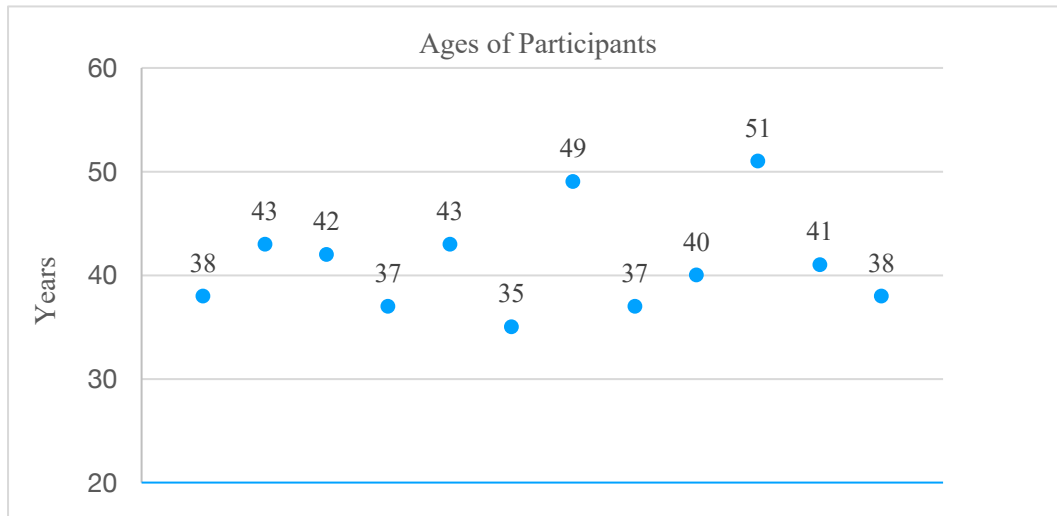
75	<p><b>The Triangular Model</b>  <b>The Situational Perspective:</b>  <i>Pastoral Identity as Contextual Construct</i></p> 
76	<p><b>Human Beings Are Inherently Social</b></p> <p><i>“The human creature is neither an autonomous individual nor an anonymous unit that has been assimilated into some collectivity, but rather a particular person who achieves a concrete identity in relation to others. Human beings are inherently social.”</i></p> <p>-Kevin VanHoozer</p>
77	<p><b>Self-Construct as Social Construction: Reinard Nauta</b></p> <p>The two dynamic elements of self-concept and the social construct interact with each other under the biblical norms about pastoral office to shape a particular pastoral identity</p> <p><i>“This self-concept is also a social construction reflecting the opinions and attitudes communicated by significance others.”</i></p> <p><i>“The self-concept can be based to a large extent on role experiences.... More or less clear expectations express how occupants of such positions should behave and think, set a standard, and give a model to their behavior.”</i></p>
78	<p><b>Social Construction of PID</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PID constructed in care-giving relationships</li> <li>• PID constructed in negotiation with cultural and institutional powers</li> <li>• PID is constructed in dynamic Interplay</li> <li>• PID is an identity-in-pastoral-relationship</li> <li>• PID is a dynamic call not only from God but also from the seekers</li> <li>• PID is pastoral trans-formation (life-long, ongoing)</li> </ul> <p>Source: Samuel Park, <i>Pastoral Identity as Social Construction</i></p>
79	<p><b>Levels of Social Construction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Micro—your church or ministry context</li> <li>• Macro—the surrounding society and its culture</li> </ul>

80	<p><b>Incarnational Ministry</b></p> <p>Main task: to embody pastoral office in myself and embed it in my context</p> 
81	<p><b>Interpretation: Pastoral Hermeneutics</b></p> <p>Contextual construction requires interpretation of the context and the people we minister to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Where am I?</i></li> <li>• <i>What is going on? What does it mean?</i></li> <li>• <i>What concept do people have of pastors? Of me in particular?</i></li> <li>• <i>What is needed?</i></li> <li>• <i>Whose needs are being met when I minister?</i></li> <li>• <i>What is expected of me?</i></li> <li>• <i>What horizontal calls am I hearing?</i></li> </ul>
82	<p><b>Educating Others on Pastoral Identity</b></p> <p>Social construction requires us to educate people on our self-concept and pastoral office.</p> <p><i>“This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.”</i> (1 Cor. 4:1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we introduce ourselves or describe our role?</li> </ul>
83	<p><b>Reflexivity &amp; Negotiation</b></p> <p><i>“[C]aregivers, as reflexive agents, do not merely accept a passively imposed identity but actively construct their identities by finding a way of embodying their vertical and horizontal calls. Thus, pastoral identity is socially constructed in negotiation with structural and cultural powers.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">—Samuel Park, <i>Pastoral Identity as Social Construction</i></p> <p><i>“In a determined and kindly tension with those who thoughtlessly presume to write our job descriptions for us, we can, I am convinced, recover our proper work.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">—Eugene Peterson, <i>The Contemplative Pastor</i></p>

84	<p><b>Pastoral Communication Model: Reinard Nauta</b></p> 
85	<p><b>Role Conflict</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage Metaphors</li> <li>• Expect expectations</li> <li>• Role ambiguity vs. role conflict</li> <li>• Who are the senders?</li> <li>• Be an actor, not just a reactor</li> <li>• Keep in mind ideal vs. actual (self-concepts tend to be ideals)</li> <li>• Have a job description!</li> </ul>
86	<p><b>For Discussion</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How does your church view you as a pastor?</li> <li>2. How do you view the people you minister to?</li> <li>3. How does our culture view pastors in general?</li> <li>4. What is the most difficult thing about your ministry context?</li> <li>5. How do others help you form or clarify your pastoral identity?</li> <li>6. How has your context changed you for the better?</li> </ol>



## APPENDIX B: PRE-TEST RESULTS



Denominations Represented	
Presbyterian Church in America	1
Evangelical Presbyterian Church	1
Presbyterian (unspecified)	2
Baptist (unspecified)	1
Southern Baptist	1
Non-Denominational	3
Episcopal	1
“None”	2

Familiarity with the Concept of Pastoral Identity	
Never heard of it	0
Sounds familiar, but don’t know what it means	2
I have a vague idea of it	6
I have a basic understanding of it	4
I understand it well and could teach it to others	0

**David Fisher, in *The 21st Century Pastor* (1996), wrote, "Back in 1954, H. R. Niebuhr wrote about the church and ministry and called the pastorate the 'perplexed profession.' Niebuhr correctly suggested that the crisis in ministry is primarily a crisis of identity. The communities in which we work no longer value our product or our role the way society once honored the church and its ministry. We are providing a service to a world that no longer wants it. Professional religious leaders are an anachronism in a secular culture. Even our congregations wonder about us." How much do you agree with his assessment? In general, are pastors "perplexed" today?**

Strongly disagree	0	
Disagree	4	
Undecided	1	
Agree	6	
Strongly Agree	1	

**How clear is your answer to the question, "Who am I as a pastor?"**

Very unclear	0	
Unclear	0	
Somewhat clear	3	
Clear	8	
Very clear	1	

**How well do you understand how pastoral identity is formed (or re-formed)?**

I have no clue	2	
I get it, but it's a little fuzzy	6	
I have a basic grasp of the process	3	
I understand it very well	1	

**Have you ever experienced a pastoral identity crisis?**

**Could you identify a pastoral identity crisis in yourself?**

Yes	7	Yes	7
No	2	No	0
Unsure	2	Unsure	5

**How confident are you to use reflection as a way of clarifying your pastoral identity?**

Very unconfident	2	
Unconfident	3	
Somewhat confident	7	
Confident	0	
Very Confident	0	

**Are you able to see the opportunity as well as the danger in a pastoral identity crisis?**

Yes, I see both	10	
No, I only see the danger	0	
Unsure	2	

How often are you conscious of metaphors or images (e.g. shepherd) that guide your practice of ministry?		
Never	0	
Rarely	2	
Sometimes	2	
Often	7	
Always	1	

Please list any metaphors/images of which you are conscious:	
“Farmer, gardener, planter, steward, shepherd, counselor, friend, leader, boss, older brother.”	“Shepherd; Example; Watchman”
“Shepherd, servant, disciple, teacher, prophet”	“Shepherd, Pioneer, Prophet, Visionary”
“Shepherd & Prophet-Priest-King & Spiritual Father”	
“Shepherd, lighthouse, compass, watchman on the wall, preparing the way, representing a loving father”	“Prophet/Visionary/Counselor”
“Shepherd; minister of reconciliation”	“Shepherd, Midwife, Lead Servant”
“shepherd, elder”	“Shepherd”

How familiar are you with the concept of "pastoral office"?		
Never heard of it	0	
Sounds familiar, but I don't know what it means	0	
I have a vague understanding of it	0	
I have a basic understanding of it	9	
I understand it well and could explain it to others	3	

How important is pastoral identity for pastoral functioning?		
Unimportant	0	
Slightly Important	0	
Moderately Important	1	
Important	5	
Very Important	6	

How aware are you of your parishioners' conceptions of what a pastor is or ought to be?		
Not aware	0	
Slightly aware	1	
Moderately aware	4	
Aware	5	
Very Aware	2	

Do you believe your interactions with people you minister to influences your pastoral identity?		Do you believe your ministry context influences your pastoral identity?	
Strongly disagree	0	Strongly disagree	0
Disagree	2	Disagree	1
Undecided	1	Undecided	0
Agree	6	Agree	7
Strongly Agree	3	Strongly Agree	4

How well do you understand the relationship between Christ's ministry and yours?		How well do you understand the relationship between your 'personal' and 'pastoral' identities?	
Not at all	0	Not at all	1
Slightly well	2	Slightly well	0
Somewhat well	1	Somewhat well	6
Well	8	Well	5
Very well	1	Very well	0

How important do you believe pastoral identity is for developing "resilience" in ministry?		
Unimportant	0	
Slightly important	0	
Moderately important	0	
Important	4	
Very Important	8	

Do you think a clear pastoral identity is useful in preventing burnout?		Do you think a clear pastoral identity can help you define and measure "success" in ministry?	
Yes	12	Yes	12
No	0	No	0
Unsure	0	Unsure	0

Rate your ability to manage the pressures and demands of ministry.		Rate your ability to manage conflict in ministry	
Not capable	0	Not capable	0
Mildly capable	0	Mildly capable	1
Moderately capable	5	Moderately capable	4
Capable	7	Capable	7
Very Capable	0	Very Capable	0

Rate your ability to manage others' expectations of you in ministry.		How interested are you in participating in this class and learning more about this topic?	
Not capable	0	Honestly, I'm not interested at all	0
Mildly capable	3	Mildly interested	0
Moderately capable	4	Moderately interested	2
Capable	5	Interested	4
Very Capable	0	Very Interested	6

# APPENDIX C: POST-TEST RESULTS

<b>Overall, I was satisfied with the seminar.</b>		<b>The seminar was a valuable experience.</b>	
Strongly disagree	0	Strongly disagree	0
Disagree	0	Disagree	0
Undecided	0	Undecided	0
Agree	2	Agree	2
Strongly Agree	10	Strongly Agree	10

<b>The information was interesting and clearly presented.</b>		<b>The info presented in the seminar will be helpful in my ministry.</b>	
Strongly disagree	0	Strongly disagree	0
Disagree	0	Disagree	0
Undecided	0	Undecided	0
Agree	4	Agree	4
Strongly Agree	8	Strongly Agree	8

<b>What did you find least helpful?</b>	
“perhaps too much technical language and quotes from sources. Summaries from Rob were as good if not better than the quotes!”	“N/A”
“Not enough Calvin. (Just kidding) There wasn't one unhelpful section as such, but that was a lot of content overall for a course. I would look at ways to identify the key insights from each section and trim content that doesn't support those.”	“I would have valued additional time for personal conversation and application because the content was of such a high quality!”
“I honestly thought the whole thing was extremely relevant and edifying.”	“The format was necessary for Rob and scheduling reasons....but it was lots of information. I can see why spreading it out would be beneficial.”
“The technical aspects of the work. While interesting some of the jargon was just not necessary for my purposes as a pastor.”	“I wish there was more time for group member discussion, and broken up over multiple sessions”
“Some of the philosophical background - especially some of the quotes that were hard to digest seemed to take away from the conversation and content that was most helpful.”	“The content was highly academic. In a pastoral setting, I think it would make more sense to dumb this down some. It felt like throughout the presentation I was trying to define terms...even in the triperspectival framework, it took a while just to try to understand the terms.”
“The only thing I can think of is not having enough time to process through and discuss the various things shared. I know this was just a function of the setting and time limitations.”	“I like seeing the research but it was a lot to take in. In the future it would help to have the slides printed as a handout.”

What did you find most helpful?	
“The idea that most pastoral disagreements come as a difference between the assumptions and expectations of the pastoral identity role between Pastor and congregation.”	“the whole concept of pastoral identity. huge and helpful.”
“The triperspectival model (normative, situational, existential)”	“*pushed a bit against missional theology....which I love...and it was healthy. The views of Trad and Mod approaches were helpful”
“The concept that my pastoral identity is primarily comprised of three separate areas: Normative, Existential, and Situational.”	“The triperspectival approach on pastoral identity - that concept prompted me to reflect on my identity as a pastor in new ways.”
“The importance of a working theology of pastoral identity serving as a diagnostic for health in ministry was what I found to be so life-giving.”	“The charts were very interesting and helpful. In particular the cycle of reflection, adjustment, and action and the way that it is a process for us to continually develop our pastoral identity.”
“The 3 parts of PID [Pastoral Identity]- Normative, Situational, and Existential. I felt these three distinctions helped provide handles to better understanding PID and where it is most likely to be malformed and broken.”	“I think the topic is incredibly beneficial...like a mine that could never been emptied. I think understanding the three components of the pastoral identity was helpful.”
“I found the framework for evaluating how we create PID really helpful, as well as the content related to the five components of the pastoral office.”	“The triangle diagram about how we construct a pastoral identity and how leaning too much on one side can create problems in ministry.”

What changes would you suggest?	
“See above! also more time for reflection and application. hearing other guys process and apply would've helped me. I would also try to differentiate between an identity "in christ" and a pastoral identity. In some of the materials/discussion, it was unclear what the outer limits of each aspect of pastoral identity could be. Is the norming authority any norm? The presbytery? 1 Timothy qualifications for an elder? In trying to make the material fit a variety of contexts you may have lost some helpful specificity. I would like to see where you think the bounds of each concept in the triangle begins and ends. Lmk if you want more specificity.”	“Less quotes...they were all good, but I could see myself getting lost in all the good content found in the various quotes and excerpts. Overall, it was great and my only suggestion is probably in line with what your plan is ultimately -- to use this framework and research as a way to cultivate discussion and evaluation for pastors and ministry teams. Time to discuss and share experiences and how the content intersects our personal temptations and experiences would be invaluable.”
“More lengthy Guided discussion after each section.”	“N/A”

<p>“Depends on the intended use for the content. Definitely needs to be more accessible and dumbed down if this is intended for the masses.”</p>	<p>“See above - identify the most important content and focus on that. Your diagrams and infographics were helpful - more of those would be useful. Also, I would really consider how you want pastors to apply the content, and think about discussion/application questions that focus on that.”</p>
<p>“I wish there were more time. I would love to have more in depth discussion, but also the lecture portions were excellent.”</p>	<p>“Need more sessions and opportunities for dialogue with others in the group.”</p>
<p>“I would put the questions at the end of the presentations throughout the content and provide timed moments of discussion around tables between 3-4 pastors.”</p>	<p>“Maybe just working on session time management - working through the material with enough space for large or small group reflection.”</p>
<p>“more space to process ideas alone with prompts and questions, then process in groups. Probably would scale back some of the quotes/definitions to the best of the best. Also, more of Rob's personal discovery/journey would make this stick even more...especially for a group of pastors who would identify with him.”</p>	<p>“Focus on the best content out of the presentation to allow more conversation. It was helpful to hear about everyone's experience and perspective related to the content”</p>

<p><b>What were the main take-aways for you?</b></p>	
<p>hard to say-- I think the transference thing. Also the triperspectival piece. That will be something I use for a long time! Also, I thought this was extremely helpful and I want more pastors and church teams to use this!</p>	<p>“the need to teach the congregation about pastoral identity knowing they already have expectations.”</p>
<p>“The importance of keeping the three PID perspectives in healthy tension, adjusting as necessary”</p>	<p>“The idea that most pastoral failure comes as a result of not acknowledging our human needs. I.e. physical, sleep, exercise, eating well, even sexual in marriage. Really good!”</p>
<p>“1. 3 parts that make up PID. 2. Jesus' PID crisis. 3. The question of what makes me a pastor, or what makes my activities pastoral”</p>	<p>“N/A”</p>
<p>“1. That we can and should "try on" different aspects of our pastoral identity to see what fits. 2. Our congregations may have a different picture of who we are than we do in our own minds. Similarly we may have a different idea what kind of people our congregation members are than they think of themselves.”</p>	<p>“1. I need to have both a healthy personal identity and a healthy pastoral identity. 2. My pastoral identity is formed not only from the Word and God's work in my heart, but also God's voice expressed through my community.”</p>
<p>“The 3 parts of PID, Re-formation Loop, Transference and the impact it has on my life and ministry.”</p>	<p>“It just refreshed for me the importance of thinking deeply and living prayerfully around a healthy pastoral identity.”</p>

<p>“PID [Pastoral Identity] will be formed by something! What is my PID being formed by? Is there some pursuit of balance in the contributing factors? Am I being faithful to the pastoral office and am I cultivating an environment of evaluation where the people around me, whom I serve, can affirm, challenge and help me grow in my role.”</p>	<p>“I need to keep all three sides if the triangle I mind when I think about my pastoral identity. I need to maintain a clear understanding of who I am both as a person and as a pastor and the relationship between the two, in order to stay healthy and effective in ministry.”</p>
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The seminar helped me clarify my pastoral identity.		The seminar gave me a better understanding of how pastoral identity is formed (or re-formed).	
Strongly disagree	0	Strongly disagree	0
Disagree	0	Disagree	0
Undecided	2	Undecided	0
Agree	7	Agree	4
Strongly Agree	3	Strongly Agree	8

The seminar improved my ability to identify a pastoral identity crisis in myself.		The seminar improved my ability to use reflection as to clarify my pastoral identity	
Strongly disagree	0	Strongly disagree	0
Disagree	0	Disagree	0
Undecided	0	Undecided	1
Agree	7	Agree	4
Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	7

The seminar increased my understanding of the importance of pastoral identity.		The seminar helped me become more aware of images that guide my ministry.	
Strongly disagree	0	Strongly disagree	0
Disagree	0	Disagree	1
Undecided	0	Undecided	1
Agree	3	Agree	3
Strongly Agree	9	Strongly Agree	7

The Triangular Model of Pastoral Identity was easy to grasp		The Triangular Model is a useful tool for conceptualizing and discussing pastoral identity.	
Strongly disagree	0	Strongly disagree	0
Disagree	1	Disagree	0
Undecided	0	Undecided	0
Agree	6	Agree	4
Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	8



How likely are you to use the seminar's model of pastoral identity to navigate the challenges I face in ministry.		The seminar improved my understanding of the relationship between my 'personal' and 'pastoral' identities.	
Very unlikely	0	Strongly disagree	0
Unlikely	0	Disagree	1
Unsure	2	Undecided	1
Likely	3	Agree	5
Very Likely	7	Strongly Agree	5

The seminar increased my understanding of how my pastoral identity is influenced by my ministry context.		The seminar deepened my understanding of the connection between my ministry and Christ's.	
Strongly disagree	0	Strongly disagree	0
Disagree	0	Disagree	0
Undecided	0	Undecided	0
Agree	7	Agree	9
Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	3

The seminar's model of pastoral identity will help me be more resilient in ministry.		The seminar's model of pastoral identity will help me measure 'success' in ministry.	
Strongly disagree	0	Strongly disagree	0
Disagree	0	Disagree	0
Undecided	1	Undecided	3
Agree	8	Agree	5
Strongly Agree	3	Strongly Agree	3

The seminar's model of pastoral identity will help me prevent burnout in ministry.		The seminar's model of pastoral identity will help me cope with the pressures and demands of ministry.	
Strongly disagree	0	Strongly disagree	0
Disagree	0	Disagree	0
Undecided	2	Undecided	1
Agree	7	Agree	6
Strongly Agree	3	Strongly Agree	5

The seminar's model of pastoral identity will help me manage conflict in ministry.		The seminar's model of pastoral identity will help me manage other people's expectations of me.	
Strongly disagree	0	Strongly disagree	0
Disagree	0	Disagree	0
Undecided	3	Undecided	1
Agree	5	Agree	7
Strongly Agree	4	Strongly Agree	4

<b>The seminar would benefit other pastors.</b>		
Strongly disagree	0	
Disagree	0	
Undecided	0	
Agree	2	
Strongly Agree	10	

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- Associate Pastor, Covenant Presbyterian Church, Naples, FL (Jan 2007—Apr 2010)
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